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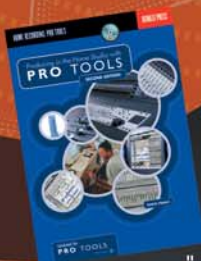
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SCM_EDITORIAL

I'm probably preaching to the converted here, but I've got a real problem with people placing judgement on musicians - well, placing judgement on anyone isn't cool but since this is a music mag, I'll stick with musicians in particular. How many times have I heard those on the "outside" assume that musicians are not intelligent? This is such a broad topic that I can't do it justice in the space here, but my point is that plenty of musicians possess more depth and intelligence than people give them credit for. I love it when this magazine reveals those sides in our interviews - and the cool thing is they slide out so naturally within the flow of speaking and then blend right in with the groove of the artists' music. Good examples this month, read Jesse Mayer's interview with cover story Anti-Flag's Justin Case or Brendan McCarthy's piece with The Weakerthans' John K. Samson to learn from where their inspiration was drawn. Of course we also offer the primal thoughts of the cavemen band Pelt - which makes for an equally, shall we say, interesting read! I'm sure it was unlike any other interview Stephanie Marino has done. Speaking of interesting, my interview with Elgin James was one of the most engaging interviews I've had in a long time - which again, like the other pieces this month - lived up to the intensity of the music. We've also got Stephanie's interview with Lamb Of God and Mike Baldino's with The Information for your reading pleasure.

Sit back, peruse, absorb, and be sure to check out the websites usually listed at the end of each feature so you can also experience the music of these diverse bands - if you're in front of a computer right now, you can do it all at once. Hey, now there's interactive reading for you!

Have a good November and in the spirit of Thanksgiving, thank you to all our writers and photographers on staff here for their enthusiasm, time, and dedication; to all you readers who pick up or click on our magazine every month and for your support; to the advertisers also for their support and belief; and of course to all the bands and musicians out there who continue to make music and feed our passion. Peace...

- *Debbie Catalano, Managing Editor*

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Postcards and petitions will be available for signing at the next BARC meeting and social, Tuesday night, November 18th, 7 p.m., Club Goodtimes, Somerville, MA. Sign up for the Yahoo group and support local music artists' rights. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bostonarearockcoalition...>

Americana songwriter/blues guitarist **Jon Shain** comes to the Boston area for a show at Club Passim, Cambridge, MA, November 15, 2003, opening for NH songwriter **Bill Morrissey**. Shain is touring in support of his brand new CD, *No Tag, No Tail Light*. He will be joined at Passim by upright bassist **FJ Ventre** (formerly of Boston's The Shods). Shain's new album was produced by legendary British drummer **Dave Mattacks** and studio wiz **Tom Dube**, and recorded with his band, **the Jon Shain Trio** in Boston this past winter. More info can be found at www.JonShain.com or by e-mailing flyinrex@JonShain.com...

Aternus Records announces the release of **Szylvia's** CD, *More Than A Kiss*. It is a unique blend of upbeat, orchestral, and modern music. Recorded in Los Angeles, CA, this brand-new CD contains many of the songs that Szylvia is famous for. *More Than A Kiss* is currently available at www.Amazon.com, www.aternusrecords.com and of course at www.szylvia.com...

Boston-based group **A Wish For Fire's** self-titled debut has been released. The CD was recorded at **New Alliance Studios**, engineered and mixed by **Nick Zampielo** and **Marc Schleicher** and mastered by Nick Zampielo. A Wish For Fire is a three-piece band with the traditional arrangement playing what they like to call "Romantic Pop." For more information please visit www.awishforfire.com...

The National Mental Health Association (NMHA) launches "**mpower: musicians for mental health**," a national youth awareness campaign that harnesses the power of music to raise awareness



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The band **Seabucket** would like to announce the arrival of their new drummer **Rich Kopp**. They are beginning work on an EP and hope to have it completed before the beginning of the year. You can check out Seabucket live at the Sky Bar in Somerville on November 20th. For further info and MP3's you can visit their website at www.seabucketmusic.com...

Beth Gibbons and **Rustin Man** have released the new CD *Out of Season* on **Sanctuary Records**. *Out of Season* is an intimate musical portrait steeped in stark melancholy, wistful melodies and dusky grit, chillingly written, and produced by Beth Gibbons and Rustin Man. Beth Gibbons is the inimitable voice of **Portishead** and **Paul Webb** aka Rustin Man is the bassist of **Talk Talk**. Go to www.bethgibbons.com for more info...

48 Rooms latest release, *Endurance*, is a 7-song E.P., a follow up to their 2002 L.P., *New Order of the Ages*. *Endurance* is the band's most polished recording to date, yet maintains all of the raw intensity of past efforts. Staying true to the band's "Black Sabbath meets Black Flag" sound, *Endurance* is a powerful and abrupt disk, clocking in at under 20 minutes from beginning to end. The 7 tracks are every bit as melodic as they are aggressive. For more details visit www.48ROOMS.com...

Experience the dynamic vocals and top-notch songwriting and musicianship from **Ian Moore** live for a special DVD release celebration. Moore is currently recording a studio companion CD for *Live* called *Luminaria* for release in early 2004. The unconventional hi-fi recording is taking place in home studios and on computers across the U.S. while Moore keeps up his hectic tour schedule. To view Ian's elec-

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tronic press kit featuring footage from the *Live* DVD and song previews from *Luminaria* at: www.ianmoore.com/lan_Moore3c.htm...

WBOS Live From The Archives features live performances from world-class artists taken from the station's vast library of recordings from WBOS' Studio 7 as well as from WBOS Private Concerts and beyond. For the first time ever, WBOS is pulling together a collection of these sought-after rarities to be released in November 18, 2003 at all area Strawberries and FYE locations. *WBOS Live From The Archives* is an extraordinary compilation of recordings produced and distributed with the assistance of **Rounder Records** to benefit The Genesis Fund. Feature artists include **Jack Johnson, Howie Day, Jason Mraz, The Wallflowers, Warren Haynes, Aimee Mann, Ben Harper, Edwin McCain, Guster, Jonatha Brooke, Pete Yorn, Gavin DeGraw, The Thorns, Kathleen Edwards, Bruce Cockburn, and Josh Joplin Group**. Visit www.wbos.com for more details...

Boston-based band, **Rainshine** have performed their last Boston performance until next summer. For the winter, Rainshine will be residing in Los Angeles after receiving offers to do a television show pilot, showcase for labels, as well as other various opportunities. A video of Woodstock 4, shot in South Africa, music clips, and other information on Rainshine is available at their website: www.rainshinemusic.com...

In an arrangement that points to the future of music distribution, **VICE Records** artist **The Streets** is releasing his new album of previously unreleased B-sides and remixes exclusively online. The Streets is the first major recording artist to have a record like this available exclusively via online retailers through paid downloads. *All Got Our Runnings* is available through the industry leading retail sites, including Apple's iTunes store, Liquid, Buymusic, Rhapsody, Musicmatch, MusicNet, Fullaudio, and others. It is sold either as tracks a la carte, or in an album bundle. The album is available in the U.S. only. Go to www.vice-recordings.com for more info...

FNX (101.7 Boston/92.1 NH/Maine) is pleased to announce the return of "**New England Product Spotlight**" airing at 2:40 p.m. and 6:40 p.m., Monday through Friday. The FNX staff is working

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Indianapolis rockers **Blue Sky Goodbye** will be filming their debut music video the first week of November. The song to be made into moving picture form will be "Remember the Radio," from their full-length *Look on the Bright Side* on **Uprising Records**. If you're from Indiana or surrounding areas, and want to be involved in any live footage for the video, please keep yourself informed at www.blueskygoodbye.com for exact dates, times, and locations...

Doniryeed Records will present their first local show at The Midway Cafe on Saturday, December 6th. The show starts at 9 and will feature local Boston bands **Seabucket** (www.seabucket.com), **Sauerkraut**, and **Great American**. Doniryeed Records is a new label created to foster up and coming local bands. Currently they are taking submissions from bands to put out a compilation CD. The best 15 songs will be chosen by Doniryeed and the CD will be released sometime this summer. For more info go to www.doniryeed.com...

Carol Noonan Christmas is the singer/songwriter's latest recording to be released in the Fall of 2003. Like her last two recordings, this album is being produced independently on **Carol Noonan's** own label. A portion of the recording costs was paid for by pre orders from her fans, who put their checks in the mail quickly to support her. The musicians include, **Duke Levine** and **Kevin Barry** on guitar, along with **Frank Gallagher** on viola and Irish whistles. Kevin will be touring with her as they support this new album heavily in December. *Carol Noonan Christmas* is available at www.carolnoonanmusic.com or as always, on the honor system by calling 866-CAROLCD...

October 29, 2003 marked the kickoff date for **The Vagrant Tour** featuring four musical favorites from the label. The tour features: **Alkaline Trio**, **From Autumn To Ashes**, **Reggie and the Full Effect**, and finishing off the bill, Vagrant's first band ever signed to the label, **No Motiv** who will be releasing their third album early next year. The tour will be coming to the Worcester Palladium on November 8. For more info about the tour, tickets, or the bands go to: www.vagrant.com...

Portland, ME band **Seekonk** is having a CD Release party at Johnny D's in Somerville Friday,



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November 14th celebrating the release of their debut album *For Barbara Lee*, on **Kimchee Records**. Johnny D's is located at 17 Holland St. in Davis Square,

Somerville, MA. The show is \$7, 21+ and begins at 9:30 p.m. Also performing will be **The Paula Kelley Orchestra** who'll be performing songs from her new release *The Trouble With Success or How You Fit*. For more information please call (617) 776-2004...

Ina May Wool's new CD, *Crack It Open*, officially emerges from its shell in the New England area on December 10th at Club Passim in Cambridge. Ina May, who grew up in Marblehead, MA, now lives in New York City and is returning for this special party/show at Club Passim. She'll be sharing the evening with **Sloan Wainwright**. The two friends, who have toured quite a bit together, will each play a set and also will help each other out musically on some of the tunes. Sloan, too, has just released a new CD; hers is called *Cool Morning*. Visit www.inamaywool.com for more info...

Boston-based singer/songwriter **Mark Femino** will be performing at Harper's Ferry in Allston, MA on Thursday, November 13th in support of his solo debut, *The Light and The Dark*. Also performing will be **Mike Farris** from **the Screamin' Cheetah Wheelies**. For more information please call (617) 254-9743...

Lonesome Recordings is proud to announce the signing of New Jersey's **Hero Pattern**. December 2 will mark the re-release of *Cut You Out*, their debut CD they self-released in September and will be celebrating it at The Middle East, in Cambridge, MA, with **The Natural History** and **Read Yellow**. Look for *Cut You Out* nationwide at retail in December and Hero Pattern in a town near you soon...

Great Northeast Productions, Inc. is proud to present folk-rock group **The Waterboys** at the Berklee Performance Center in Boston, MA on December 5. Tickets can be purchased at all Ticketmaster locations or online at www.ticketmaster.com. The Waterboys are currently touring behind their latest album, *Universal Hall*, which was released on Minty Fresh Records. For more details visit www.greatnortheast.com...



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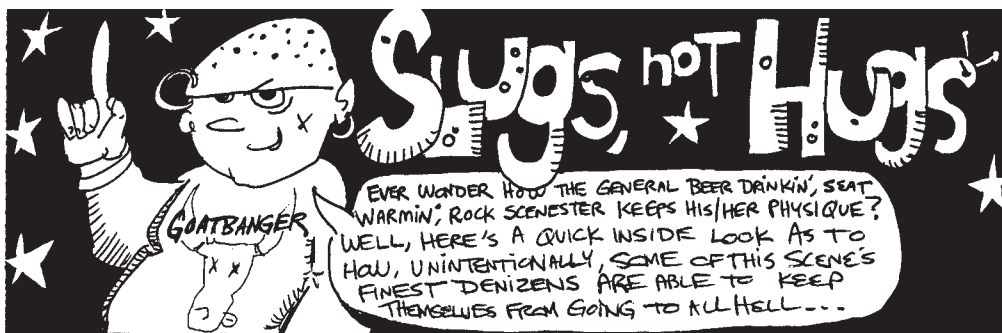
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The Weakerthans

By Brendan McCarthy
Photos by Mike Byrne

Brevity is the soul of wit, or so at least that's what Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet*. In a musical landscape full of long-winded guitar solos, concert riders that read like Dostoevsky, and epic lyrical tales of melodramatic heartbreak, only a handful of bands can produce what The Weakerthans do with a few simple chords. That's all the Winnipeg, Manitoba-based foursome need to produce music with such empathetic earnestness it would make Eminem weep on his mother's shoulder. On *Reconstruction Site*, their most recent release on Epitaph Records, the band artfully combines intellectual and emotive pop with socially and politically conscious rock – certainly not an easy task by any means. Lead singer and guitarist John K. Samson, is a meek soft-spoken man who pens lyrics drawn from classic French books, leftist literature, and lovelorn poems. I met with him at the Middle East in Cambridge, hours before their late October show. While people chatted loudly, background music blared, and bottles clanked at a high volume, Samson sat hunched at the bar reading a book and eating his dinner. What did you expect from the man who wrote a song from the perspective of cats? The song in question, "Plea From a Cat Named Virtue," is an example of a different songwriting method used to make the album, according to Samson. "It's kind of a conglomeration of a whole bunch of cats I know," says a smirking Samson, the owner of a cat named Slap. "I wanted to experiment more with writing and writing from the perspective of things and people that weren't me, that

I couldn't be. It was a political exercise in a way, to kind of broaden my horizons."

The album is chock-full of lyrical imagery. Beginning with quite possibly one of the album's best lines -- "I want to call requests through heating-vents, and hear them answered with a whisper, 'No.'" -- *Reconstruction Site* is similar to a novel's index, with each song a different chapter or week in Samson's life. With the degree of deftness at which he writes, Samson's lyrical dexterity is all-encompassing and difficult as hell to decipher, because underneath each song is a tale of heartbreak, a history book on political revolt, a lost love letter, and a diary entry from a lonely soul. Trying to delve deeper than that is futile.

On another album track, Samson scripts an open thank you note to a humble lover -- "I know you might roll your eyes at this, but I'm so glad that you exist." Then the social consciousness kicks in. On one song, titled "Our Retired Explorer (Dines With Michel Foucault in Paris, 1961)," Samson muses about a hypothetical meal with French philosopher and social critic Michel Foucault, intertwining French lyrics, a chorus of claps, and a rolling bass line into the chorus. "I think there is the theme of reconstruction and redemption and making a useful life with the tools you have at hand," says Samson. "There is a turn towards a more fictional mode of writing on this record. That kind of influenced things in a way and introduced a bit of levity and perspective on songs that maybe weren't there before."

Their set at the Middle East included a number of songs culled from their previous releases -- 1999's *Fallow* and their follow-up *Left and Leaving*, released a year later. These albums were licensed and released in the United States by Sub City Records, a subsidiary of Hopeless Records, which raises funds for nonprofit organizations by donating a percentage of album sales to the band's charity of choice. Samson, former bassist of the politically charged punk band Propagandi, says he doesn't mind The Weakerthans being called political. "I'm just as political a person as I was years ago, and I don't think the fundamentals of my politics have changed at all. Maybe I'm trying to think figure out different ways of expressing them and that's taken some time to figure out how to do. I'm still trying to figure it out. I think they are expressed through the lyrics, the politics are there, they just have to be looked for." Samson also says the band's seven years of touring has also helped him look at politics from a different perspective. "Being in the United States under the Patriot Act, you think about it every once in a while how scary law enforcement have become in this country," Samson says confidently. "It was pretty scary to start with anyway." "We have never had any trouble. But if our skin was slightly darker and we happened to be born somewhere other than Canada, we would be in a trouble. It's something you have to be conscious of."

After a few short moments chatting about all things non-rock, it's easy to imagine Samson as some worldly professor -- the kind of college professor that would quote unknown texts and show up to class in a pair of ripped jeans and a T-shirt. Despite impressive album sales, multiple transnational tours, and devoted legions of fans, Samson is simply a titular rock star -- in title only. It appears that he would be much more at ease on the prairie at his home in Winnipeg, reading books and sipping tea by the fire. It was at his house in which he met with album illustrator and artist Marcel Dzama, a 27-year-old Canadian artist who just happens to live next-door. Dzama's work has been shown throughout the United States and heralded by art critics. Dzama's odd furry animal and nurse napping scene album art adds to the *Reconstruction Site*'s artistic and cutting edge feel. And the future for The Weakerthans remains bright. Samson won't allude to any future plans, but says they'll just see what the future hands them. "It's impossible to say," Samson says. "You never really know. We'll do it as long as we still love doing it. So far we still love it. There are certainly more important things in life than being in a rock band." 🍵

Visit. www.theweakerthans.org

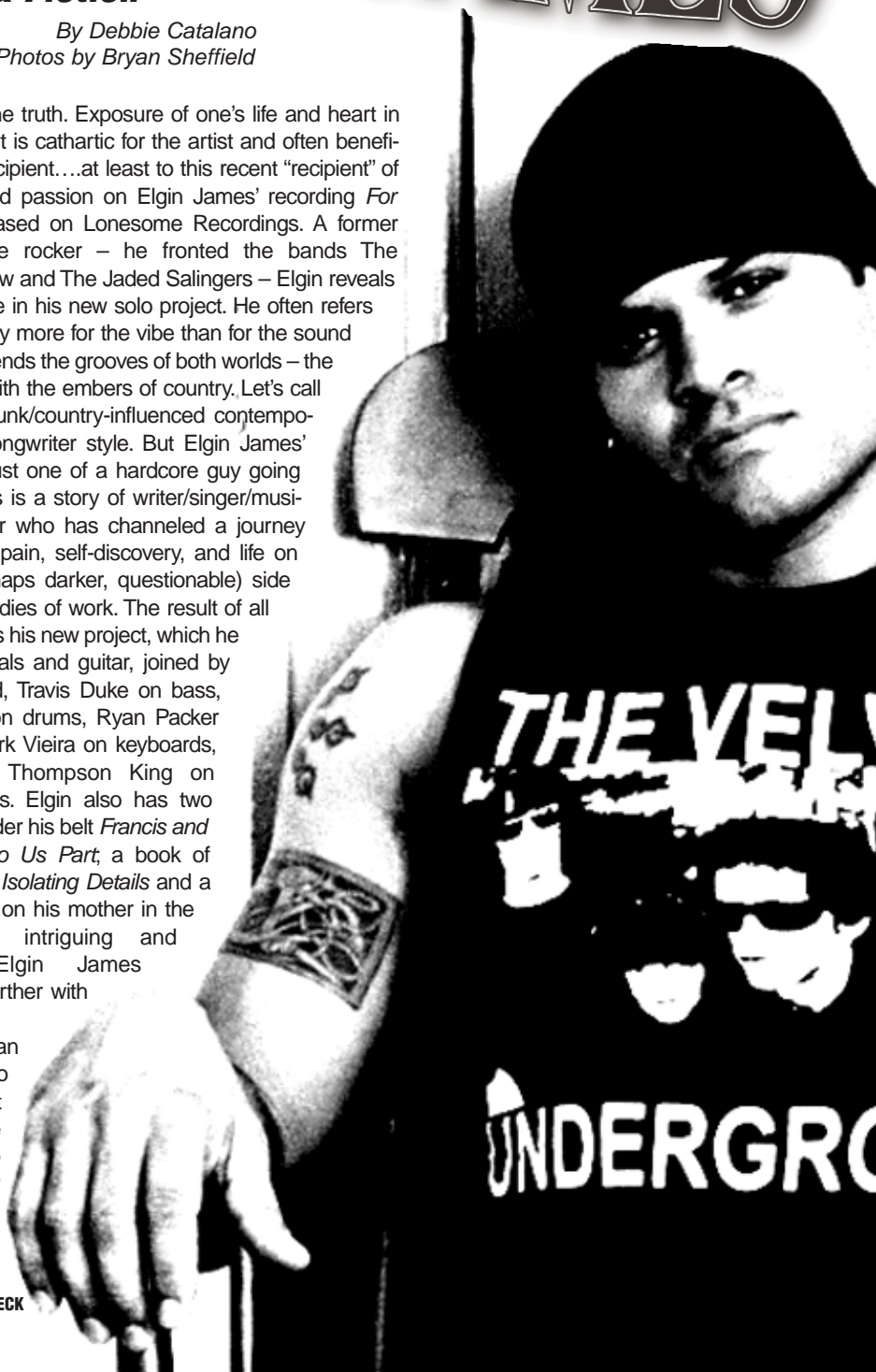


ELGIN JAMES

Truth & Fiction

By Debbie Catalano
Photos by Bryan Sheffield

Unmasking the truth. Exposure of one's life and heart in the form of art is cathartic for the artist and often beneficial for the recipient....at least to this recent "recipient" of the uninhibited passion on Elgin James' recording *For Carol...*, released on Lonesome Recordings. A former punk/hardcore rocker – he fronted the bands The Wrecking Crew and The Jaded Salingers – Elgin reveals a rootsier side in his new solo project. He often refers to it as country more for the vibe than for the sound but it really blends the grooves of both worlds – the fire of punk with the embers of country. Let's call it a sort of punk/country-influenced contemporary singer/songwriter style. But Elgin James' story is not just one of a hardcore guy going acoustic – his is a story of writer/singer/musician/filmmaker who has channeled a journey that involved pain, self-discovery, and life on another (perhaps darker, questionable) side to creative bodies of work. The result of all of the above is his new project, which he fronts on vocals and guitar, joined by his new band, Travis Duke on bass, Josh Smith on drums, Ryan Packer on guitar, Mark Vieira on keyboards, and Hayley Thompson King on backup vocals. Elgin also has two indie films under his belt *Francis and Clara* and *Do Us Part*; a book of short stories, *Isolating Details* and a documentary on his mother in the works. The intriguing and engaging Elgin James opened up further with *SoundCheck* recently – in an interview so interesting, it was quite the challenge to edit down for space.



SoundCheck Magazine: *What led you to where you are now - between your fronting the bands you were in and going solo?*

Elgin James: Well mostly I grew up on punk rock and hardcore and those were the bands I was playing in and then, I don't know, I guess as things were going on I came to a crossroads in my life of where I wanted to go and I was headed towards very bad things. I mean I could continue to be playing punk rock and hardcore right now but it wouldn't really mean anything. I try to find something that for me that was as honest as that because it wasn't honest for me anymore. Then strange enough, I found country; and I found stuff that my mom used to listen to that used to drive me crazy in the car, all these country songs that I grew up on and I'm like you know what, this is just as real and honest as punk rock, it's just like telling a story and people that have had these lives and had these adventures and had these hard times and they're just getting that across in songs – the same thing that I grew up on in punk rock. I was trying to exorcise my demons [with punk rock] and now I'm just doing the same thing just at a lower volume, I guess.

SCM: *You really opened up your heart and your life on this CD, how much of it is autobiographical?*

EJ: It's all -- every story and every song, everything is real. I'm lucky -- well I guess lucky being a strange term -- when I was recording the record my life sort of was falling apart... 'cause usually when you write a song, you write a song in your room and you just capture that moment right there and then you bring it to the practice space, show it to a band, and then you lose it each time you play it, you lose the emotion, you lose the rawness and every time you play it live you're trying to recapture a moment that already happened and by the time you've recorded in the studio, it's gone...and with this, my life was falling apart, I got to go into the studio, and I got to record that day.

SCM: *Do you feel, after doing that, that this whole process was a release for you?*

EJ: Definitely it was a release but it was also terrifying because that's the last thing you want to do to open yourself up to people like that but I can't imagine doing it any other way.

SCM: *I admire you for that because I was going to ask you if you feel almost exposed but you chose to do it...*

EJ: Yeah, I have to live with the consequences.

SCM: *I know it's been a long journey for you, everything's that's gone on with your life, and I know you were once with a street gang, so you've come a long way but you sound centered. Are you?*

EJ: Yes. Going through so much and still being involved with stuff negative and positive, I think you have to. You feel like a thousand years old...if you haven't learned anything then, you know, life is an adventure.

SCM: *That's true, at least you can walk away saying if you learned something then it's almost worth it. There are so many influences on this CD; what are you into now, musically?*

EJ: Most of my bands have all been hardcore bands, stuff that I really don't listen to that much; mostly I just listen to lots of other old country or some of the new alt country bands. There's actually a straight-edge hardcore band called Righteous Jams, after I said I'd never play hardcore again, that I play second guitar in 'cause it was such an honest, from-the-heart music that they were playing. So it doesn't matter what it is as long as it's honest and the song is going to touch me in some way.

SCM: *So you are a filmmaker, too? Tell me a little bit about that.*

EJ: Well I was actually in a couple of films just through the bands that I was in in the past people have asked me to be in their films and I really dug acting and after I was in this one called "Live Thee Force" all of sudden I realized, if I act especially with dark skin and tattoos, the only thing I'd ever get to play would be like "Mexican Prisoner Number Four" or something, so I ended up writing my own script called *Francis and Clara*; and then we didn't have any money, we were trying to figure out how to get this movie made, 'cause films are so expensive. So...there are drug dealers around Boston that are making all this money through negative means and then doing nothing positive with it. Me and a couple of other people that I was doing the film with ended up robbing a few drug dealers for the money; robbing them and pretty much coercing them because of the people that I'm affiliated with pretty much had that power to be able to coerce these people, and then we used this money for a positive thing, like to make this film and do something creative. Then when "Girls Gone Wild" were in town, we needed a camera and you know those people are just pure filth, so they were down on Lansdowne Street so we kicked the shit out of them and we needed their camera, and uh, yeah, that was pretty much how we made *Francis and Clara*.

SCM: *That was kind of like a Robin Hood type of move! Steal from the sleazy to give to the artistic community!*

EJ: Exactly! That movie's in post-production right now, we're editing that. We also did another film called "Do Us Part" and that was just in the Boston Film Festival.

SCM: *What's that movie about?*

EJ: A friend of ours actually passed away, someone that was in the gang with me, my friend Danny



Edge, who actually played in the band Kings of Nuthin', he passed away a couple of years ago so we decided to make a film in his memory and loosely based on him.

SCM: *That's really nice. Now in putting together this film funds-wise, did you have to pull the same moves that you did before –*

EJ: No, luckily because of the first way that we did that, through the sketchy way, we got capital the other way this time because people had seen what we had done and what we were capable of so then we got to shoot this film on 16 millimeter.

SCM: *You mentioned a couple times the whole street gang thing and I don't know how much you want to talk about it but was it really difficult to pull yourself out of that? Do you feel you are completely removed from it?*

EJ: I'm still super close with all those people and that's still a huge part of my life. Pretty much everyone came to a crossroads and some people were falling out and getting into the whole nine-to-five world and becoming like what we call civilians and then actually the majority of them were all joining motorcycle gangs, which they've had complete success at. Two of my close friends are presidents of different chapters and it may not be the kind of success that a lot of people think of as success but when you come from nothing, like that, president of an international crime organization, that's pretty huge. And I just kind of had to find my place with everything.

SCM: *And yours was music.*

EJ: Mine is music. I just had to find my place and what I want to do with the rest of my life and mine was music. My past, I don't look down at it at all; and even in my present I'm still associated and affiliated with these people.

SCM: *You knew it was leading you down sort of a bad path as far as for you or your life or health-wise but it didn't mean that you broke ties with friendships but it seems like you took the fabric of that life and it's just helping you creatively?*

EJ: Exactly. You said it better than I could. It's true and I've sort of come to peace with that. Just turning my back on that, I mean it's also such a strong part of who I am. You hear these rap artists saying, Oh I'm going to whack you with my gat or this and that and it's all posturing and this is like the same thing. I'll sing you a pretty little love song but then I'll stab you in the neck.

SCM: *It seems like in everything that you're expressing, whether it's in music or in your stories or film is about getting real and being honest and getting that across – which you do.*

EJ: Definitely, even all my short stories have been autobiographical, so writing scripts was the first time I could actually dabble in fiction a little bit. That was kind of cool to put my head in a different place.

SCM: *You talk a lot about this being country but I wouldn't consider you a country artist. Is that what you consider yourself or is that just the influence?*

EJ: It's influences. I guess it's what I say more than anything else....so we try to play country and it comes out in this whole fucked up way that if someone was into country, wouldn't consider this country at all. Someone might consider it either singer/songwriter or just like rock or whatever. This is where we're coming from. I guess more country influence less by the music and just by the tone; and by it being autobiographical and by having it be, hopefully, honest.

SCM: *It's the same idea of country music, but I can hear the punk in there, which is cool.*

EJ: Awesome. That's what I was afraid of sometimes, like ooh, maybe this is a little too slick. Everyone involved with the record, from the top to the bottom, even the producer, does like punk rock bands and hardcore bands. Making the record was a very cleansing thing, it was also a very terrifying thing, and I just had this fear of people just not getting it, your review was actually quite healing for me. It was like Oh, O.K., cool. Someone did get it. ♡

Contact www.lonesomerecordings.com or www.elginjames.com for more info. on Elgin, including upcoming shows.

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Condition Blue
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Bedlam 23

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Audible Mainframe
Dryft
48 Rooms
3 Minute Theory
Leaving Eden
New Son Rising

NOVEMBER 21ST

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THE FINALS - FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5TH



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of the finals will win a
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SOUND CHECK

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INDIE RELEASES

BOBBY BARE JR.'S YOUNG CRIMINALS' STARVATION LEAGUE

OK-I'm Sorry...
(Bloodshot)

barejr.net

Bare's second release with the Starvation League is an eight-song EP, half of which is live, with the other half being new material. "Flat Chested Girl From Maynardville," from Young Criminal's Starvation League, is reprised live, as is that disc's strongest cut, "I'll Be Around." Bare shocked some fans of his previous band, Bare Jr., when he shifted to a rootsier sound, and may really floor them with his cover of "I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing." The fluffy song was a ubiquitous prayer for peace (and the jingle for Coke commercials) in the early '70s, and is certainly as relevant now as ever. But Bare is at his best with a rougher edge, like on a second version of "I'll Be Around" that is his original demo for the record company. The song is an excellent showcase for Bare's voice, rich with emotion, as he accompanies himself on acoustic guitar and harmonica. "Mother Ucker" is a new song (that's the actual title, no dirty lyrics) that uses keyboard to create a reggae lilt, giving the song a cool Austin Rasta vibe. Up-and-comer Tywana Jo Baskette guests on another new song, "Pinky."

- Kevin Wierzbicki

FINGERBOMB No Show (5aRecords)

This album features a sound that in pretty hard to find nowadays; straight-up rock. The vocals here are remarkably similar to Tool's Maynard James Keenan. While vocals and driving guitars are similar in both Tool and Fingerbomb, the latter steer away from progressive metal and instead plays their songs in the standard three to four minutes. "Animated" shows the polarity of the band, who begin the song with a friendly skate-punk riff and continues into a more intense metal song, full of guitar theatrics, before seamlessly flowing back into the laid back riff the song had started with. The live bonus track is completely unnecessary, and if anything only detracts the good album that precedes it.

- Johnny Gaffney

THE VEXERS Gangland Ballads & the Death Sex Set (Ace Fu Records) acefu.com

If Bush was the apotheosis of grunge generica, then The Vexers are the Bush of the Williamsburg post-punk revival. Singer/guitarist Jennifer Taylor sounds exactly like a combination

of Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O., but her smoothed-out, controlled phrasing is made pleasant for the masses; even her screams sound studied and stilted. Guitarist Tres Warren is a masterful player, but he works from off-kilter clichés and a bag of tricks borrowed from Gang of Four's Andy Gill. Every element that made the aforementioned bands exciting and love-hate for so many listeners is absent on this album - there's no desperation and no blood on these tracks, and somehow they're all the better for it. But there's something pleasant about consistency even if it is the last refuge of the unimaginative, and Gangland Ballads...is undeniably satisfying for its genre, even though you've heard it all before (and done better at that). The Sex Pistols proved that punk was built on charlatanism, and that's cool man, that's cool...I'll grudgingly admit to liking Bush's singles, so don't go by me.

- Mike Baldino

MANIC HISPANIC The Menu Incident (BYO Records) byorecords.com

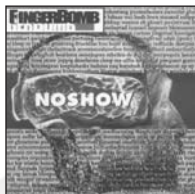
Sure, it sounds like a horrible idea - Spanglish rewrites of punk classics by bands including Black Flag ("Wasted," "No Values"), Wire ("1 2 X U"), The Clash ("Garage Land (Barrio Land)"), The Seeds ("Pushin' Too Hard"), The Damned ("New Rose"), The Buzzcocks ("Orgasm Addict"), X ("Los Angeles"), and even little-known Iggy ditties ("I Got a Right") performed frat party-style, but the band's enthusiasm is infectious. Manic Hispanic knows they can never outdo the originals and they ain't even gonna try, but they're sure as shit gonna have fun banging out the set. The perfect soundtrack for your next rowdy get-together when you want people to sing along and say, "Wait, what the hell is this?" at the same time.

- Mike Baldino

SMOGTOWN Tales of Gross Pollution Early Recordings - 1995/1996 (Disaster Records) disasterrecords.com

Hydrogen may be the most abundant of all elements in the universe, but shitty, boring punk rock is gaining fast on its heels. I can't even be bothered to come up with more clever analogies about how unnecessary this music is. Just know that as you read this, there are 72,000 bands playing this exact set to their 12 friends in dive bars, VFW halls, and basement parties around the globe.

- Mike Baldino



NEW BOMB TURKS

Switchblade Tongues, Butterknife Brains
(Gearhead Records)
gearheadrecords.com

They get an extra star in the rating 'cause they used to be great, but really - when's the last time The New Bomb Turks made an album worth listening to, much less getting excited about? This odds 'n' sods collection of late '90s/early-aughts B-sides and EP tracks (nine covers in all) is a far cry quality wise from their similarly themed Pissing Out the Poison comp; its 10 unreleased cuts will be a boon to completists and a bore to everyone else. Sometimes things remain in the vaults for a reason.



- Mike Baldino

SUGAR RAY & THE BLUENOTES
FEATURING MONSTER MIKE WELCH
(Savern Records)
severnrecords.com

As much as I hate to be wrong, I'll be the first one to let you know when I'm mistaken...and I was wrong, O.K.? I got this CD and was perplexed: why the heck are the editors sending me this? I sometimes see the name "Sugar Ray & The Bluenotes" in the club listings and I've always written them off. I'm sure that we've all had these unfounded reasons about some band—"They've been around forever...They probably used to be O.K., but now they're just some stale, borderline blues/GB band...Sugar Ray is some lame band from CA...etc." I apologize, Ray, for everything I've ever thought about you. I apologize because this CD is a spectacular lesson in some of the extremes of the blues genre. I apologize because this is the most lively, energetic, fresh blues music that I've heard in quite some time. I apologize for my ignorance of the facts regarding you, your music, and your band. I apologize for being THIS far out of the loop (although we can't ALL know EVERYTHING). I apologize because I'm a schmuck. Did I cover all the bases? Now, that being said, let's move forward... Sugar Ray has been around forever, played with everybody, done everything, and is the REAL DEAL bluesman! (I can say these things with all certainty...now!) This CD gives us a smattering of everything from country blues ("Feeling Blue") to almost zydeco ("Why the Sun Sets Red and Low") to Chicago blues ("Love and Trouble") to...well...all kinds of stuff. Hot blues, cold blues, jump blues (how many names are there?); Sugar Ray runs the gambit and somehow manages to make it all work together. I cannot say enough good things about this disc—the harmonica howls/growls/squeals like it should, the guitar work is smokin', and the band is as tight as a frog's ass. This is a blues aficionado's dream. Awesome stuff, guys. Awesome. Obviously, this is my pick of the month. Go out and find this one! (And go catch the boys late November/early December when they swing through here!)

- Smash



STICKS AND STONES
The Strife and Times
(Chunksaah Records)
chunksaah.com

Here's an odd one—usually, the more I listen to something, the more familiar it becomes and the more I like it. This time, though, the more I listen; the more I DIS-like this two-CD set. Making my way through this retrospective forces me to realize just how dated and irrelevant this sounds. Now, all of a sudden, I'm questioning the past. Hmm. I don't like this. These guys have been broken up since 1995 and now we get this double CD retrospective? Why? Does somebody think there's a buck or two to be made here? The press kit really speaks in hyperbole—they were the "best" this, the "first" that, seven the "most" something else—and this set doesn't back that up. If you were a fan of the band the first time around, this might work for you. If, however, you never heard of Sticks and Stones...then this CD won't win you over. There's nothing here that a million other bands don't do better. Sorry.

- Smash



FROM AUTUMN TO ASHES
The Fiction We Live
(Vagrant Records)

From Autumn To Asses is more like it. "The Fiction We Live." Sounds autobiographical. Like "we are a fictional metal band." Hints of Maiden courtesy of melodic harmonized guitar lines. Overly syncopated shit from the crunch guitars, bass, and super compressed drums adding a Dream Theater quality, nu metal/Cookie Monster vocals accompanied by some very emotional backing vocals (which take lead on Track 3) with very poppy choruses throughout. Make up your fucking mind guys. Are you emo? Are you metal? Are you prog? Or are you just gay? No fucking guitar solos from a fucking metal band!!!!!! At least a fucking ripping guitar solo to get something hard. Back in the '80s I could see these guys describing themselves as serious metal band with a commercial edge. This shit makes my dick limper than Bob Dole's arm.....

- Tony Savarino

FIGHTING JACKS
Dying Art of Life
(Tooth and Nail Records)

A far effort. A hard rock band leaning towards a grunge/metal early '90s sound. At times they've got a cult thing going on. Catchy emotional vocals, good solid musicianship. they are not really taking any chances or breaking any new ground. I would like to have heard a rawer production sound, more room mics on the drums, and dirtier guitars (think Led Zeppelin "Presence" guitar sound wise). All the songs seem to head towards minor keys and/or modal progressions. Track 5 "Photobook" was cool kind of a U2 thing. Almost as if Cave In wrote a pop song. Lyrically these guys are coming from a very anti-establishment/we're so oppressed sort of place. I wish the music was too. I get a real careerist vibe from them. Very safe and professional. This won't offend anyone or make anyone wet.

- Tony Savarino





FROM THE FOUNDRY

ALL OUT WAR
Condemned to Suffer
 (Victory Records)
victoryrecords.com



This is by far All Out War's finest work. The cover art and lyrics have apocalyptic, religious overtones, but are not silly, as that type of thing so often is. Musically and thematically the record is a cross between Sepultura's "Chaos AD" and Earth Crisis' "Gomorrah's Season Ends." That's a huge compliment in my book. All Out War avoids the inconsistency of so-called "crossover bands." The metal parts are adequately metal, and the hardcore chugging parts are thick as syrup, heavy as lead. I was never a fan of this band before this, but "Condemned to Suffer" won me over.

- Shawn Macomber

THE CROWN
Possessed 13
 (Metal Blade)
thecrownonline.com



The Crown is a band I've heard a ton of hype about, and not just from the record company's numerous promotional campaigns, mind you. I'm talking about that "I've got no vested interest" kind of promotion...the real deal...when some young kid runs up to you at a show or IMs you online or posts on a message board just teeming with delight over what they just heard. They exasperatingly ask you "so have you heard the new The Crown?" and then, without awaiting your response, inject "isn't it just the most incredible thing EVER!?" Well the expectation that brand of promotion sets up are usually easily knocked down and more often than not the aforementioned kid proves to be certifiably insane as the conversation continues. This brings us to the new The Crown CD. Does it live up to the crazy kid's billing? Well, like the B-movie themed album insert packaging it appears with, yes and no. "Possessed 13" is a decent neo-thrash offering, with some good riffs, some awesome drumming, and some expectantly nasty growly vocals. If you listen to this album ready for some simplistic, stripped-down metal, all set to thrash your head in at the local dive bar, I think you will be able to appreciate what The Crown has to offer. A musical masterpiece it is not, but like a good B-movie, it doesn't really profess itself to be a great work of art, it's really just there for you to have a good time, and if you are ready to bang your head 'til your neck snaps off, you probably will.

- King Al

KILL 2 THIS
mass. (down.)-sin.(drone.)
 (Abstract Records)
kill2this.com

What kind of music do you imagine people would kill to? Maybe

something creepy like Tubular Bells or the soundtrack to Hal-loween? Or maybe some brutal death metal or hardcore perhaps? I didn't look at the band bio sheet before I popped this CD in, so I expected some of the later. What I got however was not the bone crushing hardcore death metal assault I expected, but rather a steady, very melodic and somewhat heavy modern rock/nu-metal act that, according to that aforementioned bio (which I proceeded to give a glance), apparently hail from England. The first track on "mass. (down.)-sin.(drone.)" is probably the most appealing, a radio-ready track called "The Truth... And Other Lies." This band apparently has been heating up the European touring circuit opening for all kinds of old metal bands, and from the sounds of this recording they could be making some waves in the U.S. pretty soon.

- Kill R' Al

SYMPHONY IN PERIL
Lost Memoirs and Faded Pictures
 (Facedown Records)
facedownrecords.com



This is the new band of former ZAO vocalist Shawn Jonas. Symphony in Peril is very much in the tradition of ZAO, although this record is probably better executed than any ZAO ever produced. It's a good effort. But I just don't hear anything new here. The band describes themselves as "chaotic metal core," which is accurate, to a fault I'd say. But there has been zero change in the genre, and the tricks that were so fresh and exciting six years ago (longer if you hearken back to Rorschach) are definitely wearing thin. I have heard every riff on this record many times over now. The question becomes, if you aren't doing anything new, why should a fan of this genre put down cold hard cash for a record that sounds identical to several they already own?

- Shawn Macomber

FARMAKON
A Warm Glimpse
 (Earache Records)
earache.com



Good Scandinavian metal ala Opeth. Lots of tempo changes, some tasty acoustic interludes, and a growing vocalist trading lines with a more sugary singer. There's a lot here to be admired musically, and the record has some great moments. Ironically, the clean, classical guitar parts are the most interesting parts here. Probably not the best compliment you can pay a metal band, but true nevertheless. The main issue is that there is just too much of a formula at work on "A Warm Glimpse" and the songs get a tad predictable by the end.

- Shawn Macomber

HATEBREED

The Rise of Brutality
(Universal Records)
hatebreed.com

The Hatebreed chug and grind machine rolls on. "The Rise of Brutality" kicks off with the riff that ended their last record, "Perseverance." And so it goes. You know what you're getting with this record. Hatebreed isn't dabbling in emo or going off on progressive rock wank solos. They are sticking with the unrelenting, chunky hardcore they've built their rep on. Jamey Jasta is still saying whatever the hell he wants to say, the lyrics full of anthemic stanzas about overcoming diversity and becoming a better person. Why is Hatebreed so huge? Why are they now cited as an influence by both Metallica and Slayer? Simply because no one does it better.

- Shawn Macomber

INTEGRITY

To Die For
(Deathwish, Inc.)
deathwishinc.com

Integrity is back. "To Die For" will compliment "Humanity is the Devil" and other Integrity classics well. Fast, thrashy hardcore a cut above nearly everyone else. There is a reason, after all, that Integrity is a legend in underground circles. Lyrically the proceedings are as dark as ever. The songs on this record are well suited for a live setting. This will be likely be the tour to beat this year. Usually when a band has been around as long as Integrity, you wish they'd just quit - remember when Earth Crisis became a rap-core outfit? But I couldn't be happier with this latest release. Jacob Bannon of Converge delivers another great cover art package as well.

- Shawn Macomber

SIX FEET UNDER

Bringer Of Blood CD & DVD
(Metal Blade)
sfu420.com



All hail the most intense death metal record of the year. I had been waiting for the arrival of "Bringer of Blood" with great anticipation and Six Feet Under does not disappoint by any means. "AmeriKa the Brutal," the first single put out for this record, is definitely a great pick. Chris Barnes has a masterful voice on "Bringer of Blood": you can feel the intensity. I have much respect for a band that does their own producing, such as Barnes did on this record. He also had a hand in the mixing process, too. That's a lot of pressure to put on one's self, but listening to this record you can see that he did a fabulous job. The extreme guitar work on Track #3, "My Hatred," really brings out what Six Feet Under is all about, Death. Every member of SFU is really put out there for you to hear on this record and makes a great mark of death for your enjoyment. Track #6, the title track, "Bringer Of Blood," has a feel that it was a ritual of SFU and they sealed it with their own blood, "together we're as one." Track #9, "Blind and Gagged" is one of my faves on this record; there is a very rebelled attitude given in just a few words, short and sweet, if you don't like it then fuck you. O.K., bonus track after the last song, search for it;

let's just say it's different. The 24-page booklet of artwork, done by David Aronson, with lyrics, is the best stuff I've seen this year. SFU really took their time with this record and it shines through with evil colors. Next stop DVD.

- Metal Wench

THE MAKING OF BRINGER OF BLOOD DVD (Metal Blade)

Well there are several areas to go, first stop is the interview with Death vox, Chris Barnes. As he's rolling a fatty to smoke up with the viewers he gives an interlude to what you will see in the Making of Bringer of Blood. You can go in any order that you wish, but I chose next to go to the photo gallery, pretty sweet. Now it's off to "The Making of Bringer of Blood." I never thought I would see SFU in their practice space, which is at Greg's house. By the way, they are all Tampa sports fans, Tampa Bay Bucs shirts are being sported and Tampa Bay Lightning shirts, too. Goes to show that death metal musicians are sports fans also. Anyway, off to the studio, there's a lot of heavy work going on, but some fun too, i.e., SFU members mooning. So this is like a longer and better version of your typical VH1 or MTV "Making of..." shows. Oh, there is also a cool documentary that you can watch. By the way, Barnes was executive producer for the DVD. Metal Wench says this collection is a must-have for every death metal fan in the world.

- Metal Wench

AKERCOCKE Choronzon (Earache Records) earache.com



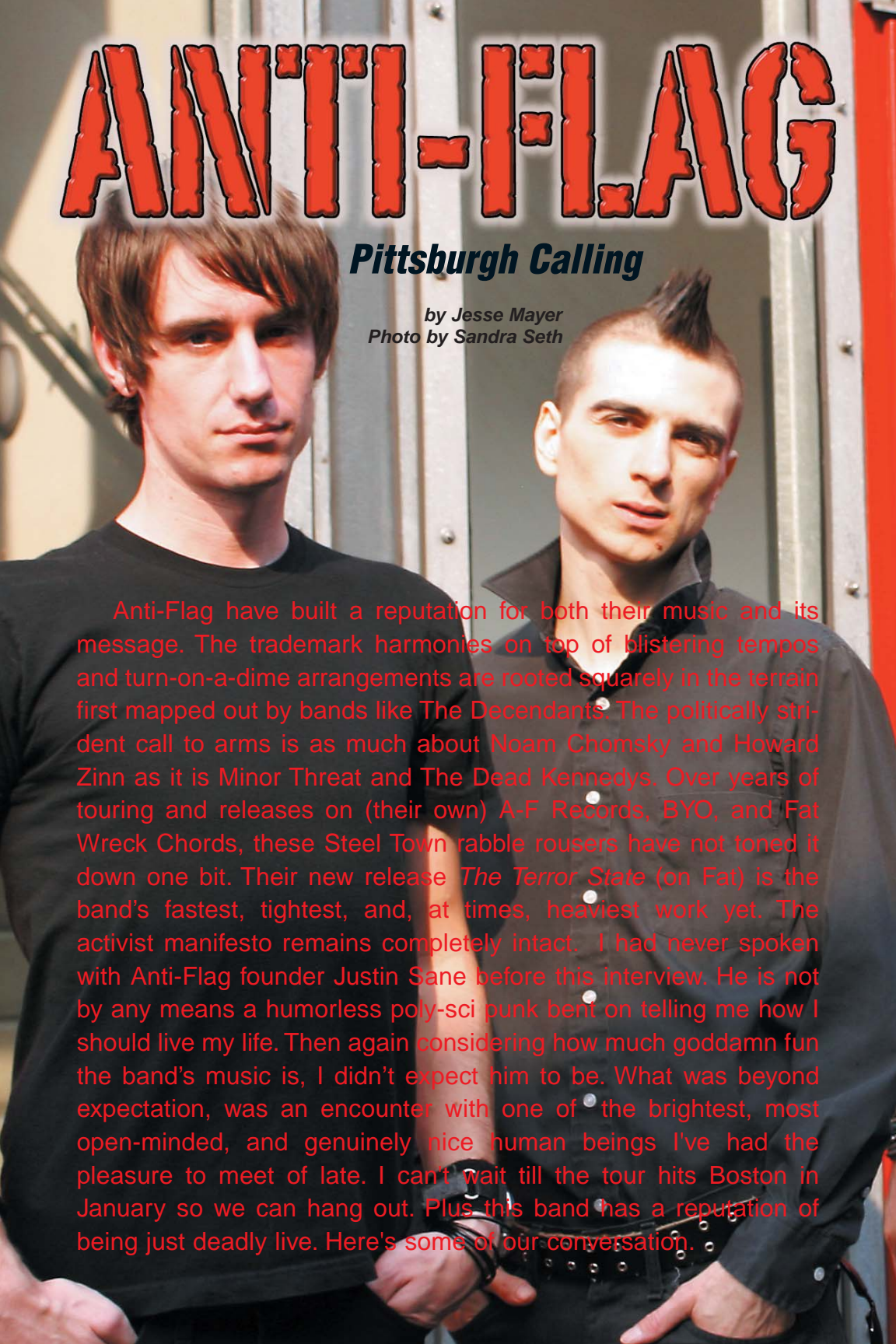
I gotta say it, I'm scared. This Satanic metal record from Akercocke has me feeling like I should be looking over my shoulder. Choronzon almost has that bring-to-life image of Satan pulling you to hell. So if that's what Akercocke is trying to do, than by God they did it. I think I need an exorcist. It's very different from a lot of records, you see it has 99 tracks listed on the CD, but the entire score is just under an hour. Very clever though. I'm at Track #9, which is actually Song #2, "Prince of North," very strange, but sounds like something out of an old movie, set in India. Really good musicianship and finally some vocals, too, starting on Track #16, Song #3, "Leviathan." I'm not scared anymore. Some very intense black and death metal all rolled into one. Give it up to Earache for signing these guys. If you haven't heard of Akercocke before, this is a good place to start. "Choronzon" has so much style and scariness, you know where you put your hand over your eyes and peek through just to get enough without shitting yourself, that I may hit a place of worship to be cleansed. Mind you, I'm not a Satanist as these guys are, but if making music is the only harm they cause, then I'm all for it. Check it out for yourself, it is metal and I think you will enjoy Akercocke's "Choronzon."

- Metal Wench

ANTI-FLAG

Pittsburgh Calling

by Jesse Mayer
Photo by Sandra Seth



Anti-Flag have built a reputation for both their music and its message. The trademark harmonies on top of blistering tempos and turn-on-a-dime arrangements are rooted squarely in the terrain first mapped out by bands like The Decadents. The politically strident call to arms is as much about Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn as it is Minor Threat and The Dead Kennedys. Over years of touring and releases on (their own) A-F Records, BYO, and Fat Wreck Chords, these Steel Town rabble rousers have not toned it down one bit. Their new release *The Terror State* (on Fat) is the band's fastest, tightest, and, at times, heaviest work yet. The activist manifesto remains completely intact. I had never spoken with Anti-Flag founder Justin Sane before this interview. He is not by any means a humorless poly-sci punk bent on telling me how I should live my life. Then again considering how much goddamn fun the band's music is, I didn't expect him to be. What was beyond expectation, was an encounter with one of the brightest, most open-minded, and genuinely nice human beings I've had the pleasure to meet of late. I can't wait till the tour hits Boston in January so we can hang out. Plus this band has a reputation of being just deadly live. Here's some of our conversation.



I "THINK THAT KIND OF PHILOSOPHY IN PUNK ROCK IS REALLY SELF-DEFEATING AND IT'S BACKWARD"

SoundCheck Magazine: *I have a quote on my wall - it says, "Things may be fucked, you may be fucked, the whole world may be fucked but a great rock song can change all that for a few minutes. A great album for an hour - and that's something." Do you believe that a rock song or a rock band can still change the world and if so, how?*

Justin Sane: Well, I don't know. I hope so. I hope that a good enough song that it's about something and inspire enough people and encourage enough people to think about things and act on those things they're thinking about. I'm not going to say that I definitely believe that because I don't know that I definitely - that I dare to dream that that can happen. I think that it's a good place to start.

SCM: *Interesting. Do you feel it's more important in a song to raise questions or provide solutions?*

JS: Well I think that you *have* to raise questions because if you don't raise questions then the dialogue never starts. So the questions have to be raised. As a musician and as an artist, for me I think my strongest thing or the thing that I can do best is raise questions. I'm not going to pretend that I'm a genius and I can solve every single problem; but I am hoping that by raising the question maybe someone out there smarter than me will have some solutions that make sense and that we'll push those people to look for some solution - and of course I have my own ideas, but again, I don't know that necessarily my ideas are the answer or not.

SCM: *Two-part question: What three people in rock do you admire the most and why?*

JS: For me it's mostly I think outside of the rock clubs - I don't know if these are the utmost three people because I've never really sat down and thought about it, but just off the top of my head, I really admire Fat Mike. I've had nothing but good interactions with him; he has made a lot of money without fucking people. It's not like Fat Mike is manufacturing chemicals or weapons, and I understand that 'cause my thinking is just that people in the punk scene or whatever, they have a problem with Fat Mike or having made a lot of money and my answer to that is, Hey man, not only has Fat Mike made a lot of money but he's done it in a way where he hasn't screwed anybody or anyone that I'm aware of, he hasn't screwed people to do it, and secondly, he's helped a lot of people with that money and he's put his money back into bands like us - bands that he thought were doing interesting things and he's kept a lot of money in that punk rock subcultural, underground.

SCM: *You know, you touched on something about the punk police going, "Mike bad, Mike makes money, therefore bad." One of the things that really, really irritates me to no end in squatter politically correct anarchist punk subculture is an awful lot of squatter punks that I know also seem to avail themselves of a lot of government assistance.*

JS: Well, you know I just think the whole thing is completely self-defeating. The reality is in this country and in this world if you want to have influence and you want to be able to make an impact, you've got to have resources behind you and you've got to have some money behind you. Like I said, I don't think there's anything wrong with earning money as long as you're not hurting other people to do it. So I think that kind of philosophy in punk rock is really self-defeating and it's backward. If you're so consent about making a change in the world then you have to be realistic about what it takes to do that. Pretty much that's all there is to say!

SCM: *Do you want to go back to the three people you admire?*

JS: I totally got off that... It's cheesy as fuck but the truth is, my parents, I would include them as one person because what was amazing to me about my mom and dad, they're always supportive of the band and what we're trying to do and they've given us a ridiculous amount of money over the years - I'm sure neither of us know how much - and at times when they didn't have it. My parents aren't wealthy people; they're literally poor people to this day, and to have somebody believe in you that much and really do what they can, believe what you're doing to support you through it when they really can't, I've always really respected my parents for that. We're in a place now where we're starting just to pay my parents back and it feels good to do that because they've always really backed us. Then if I had to pick a third person, I guess there's tons of anybody who could also tie for that third slot, but I guess if I were trying to narrow it down - well Arundhati Roy is one of the people that we mentioned in the record and somebody who I really admire because she's from India and it's hard enough for a woman in India to get the kind of stature and attain the kind of stature that she's attained but she's put her life on the line countless times to help thousands and thousands of people. I like her philosophy; I think that she's a really, really interesting person. She's current, she's somebody who is doing things right now, so that's why I mention her.

SCM: *To shift out of the three people you admire the most, I have a feeling that the next person I'm going to mention you also admire: Tom Morello.*

JS: Yeah, for sure.

SCM: *Was the decision to do this CD with him based on really music, politics, or you guys go way back anyway - or all three of the above, which seems like when I ask, the obvious answer.*

JS: Yeah, it definitely is, because one of the things that happened with Tom - Tom was aware of Anti-Flag and he had the Rage Against The Machine management ask us to open for Rage Against The Machine, so we went out there and then we met Tom and he was great. One of the things that made such an impact on us, though, about Tom was he *knew* music. It wasn't just hip-hop, it wasn't just punk, Tom was all over the place and it was cool the references he was pulling out, everywhere from like cock rock, spandex metal to pure jazz musicians. That was one of the things that always stuck with me from that time that we spent with Tom; but then, too, politically he just made sense. Basically what happened is we had a group of songs and we were like, we felt really good about these songs, it would be really great if we had somebody who was a really good musician who could write good music and work on these songs with us and that's when we thought of Tom. He was pretty much the best musician we know; he was one of the smartest people we know; how about Tom - and that's how his name came up. He was our first choice and luckily he was really into doing it.

SCM: *Well, it worked.*

JS: Yeah, it was cool 'cause he did. It was great. We literally had 40 songs written and we demoed them and we gave them to Tom and he kind of picked through them and "these are my favorite songs and I think this part is weak in this song and this part is strong in this song," and we just kind of went through all the songs like that.

SCM: *Forty songs? That's a massive body of work given in preproduction. What, you like four-tracked all 40 of them or something and gave them to him?*

JS: No, we recorded some in a full studio. We just one day we went in and performed them live - twice, though, so two different sessions - and I think we did 18 songs in one session and like 22 or 23 songs in the next session and we had them all.

SCM: *Oh my God that's going above and beyond - even to narrow down...how many wound up on the disc?*

JS: It was 13.

SCM: *Even just to narrow it down to the songs and then actually get into, Gee, do you think maybe you should do the chorus again here and cut it in half there?*

JS: [Laughs] That's what it was! It was such a battle to get it down. I think when we went into the studio we ended up doing 17 or 18 songs so there was a couple songs that didn't make it on the record, even just to go from 40 down to like 18 songs, it was a nightmare because everybody has their own personal attachment to different songs and then you finally get that figured out.

SCM: *That's pretty prolific writing. How much of the time between the release of "Underground Network" and recording "The Terror State" were you on the road?*

JS: I would say it was about 50/50. In that time period we were probably on the road at least half of that time. We're on the road a lot.

SCM: *Are you guys at home in Pittsburgh enough to maintain a permanent rehearsal space there so that when you're not there you can just go in and play?*

JS: You know, we really don't. At A-F Records we would usually set our gear up right in the middle of the main office and then at night when everybody goes home we'd just come in and play - it was funny. Sometimes we'll play even when everybody was there, like, Put in a pair of earplugs and we'll go for it. It's not very usual because obviously it doesn't make for a very productive work environment!

SCM: *I don't know - not productive with that kind of output. I mean 40 songs - even if 20 of them sucked, which they probably don't, you still have 20 great songs, that's amazing.*

JS: What I meant was, it's not very productive for the people at A-F Records like when they're trying to talk on the phone.

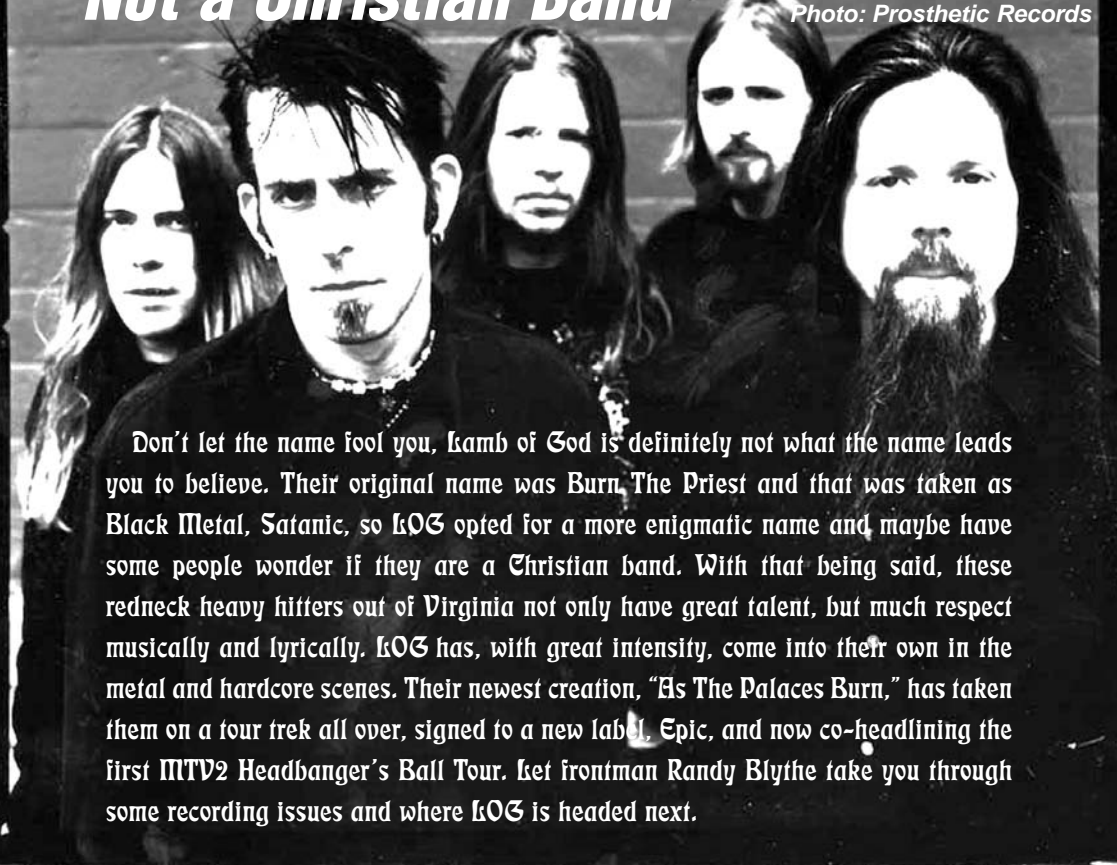
SCM: *Oh yeah, absolutely. I don't think I'll be talking to my boss if I'm having my band rehearse in here any time soon. That's not going to happen. You've been doing this since you were really young and since you've toured so much with so many bands and started young, what have you learned about acceptance and tolerance through this process of your own band members and other bands that you tour with?*

JS: Well you know, I mean, we've had great experiences and bad experiences. I think that the main thing for me that I finally have got to the point where I'm willing to let everybody be their own thing. For us as individuals, it's kind of an unbelievable how on the same page we are and we're really tight and we're always watching out for each other and we just get along. We're just really lucky. I don't know how that happened. I think that the main thing is that we roll with the punches and nobody gets hung up on any little issues, and for me I think that's the main thing for me with touring. If there's something small that somebody's doing that could bother me or I want to go to one restaurant and everybody else wants to go to another restaurant, you know those are the kind of things that you could get angry about if you

LAMB OF GOD

Not a Christian Band

By Stephanie Marino
Photo: Prosthetic Records



Don't let the name fool you, Lamb of God is definitely not what the name leads you to believe. Their original name was Burn The Priest and that was taken as Black Metal, Satanic, so LoG opted for a more enigmatic name and maybe have some people wonder if they are a Christian band. With that being said, these redneck heavy hitters out of Virginia not only have great talent, but much respect musically and lyrically. LoG has, with great intensity, come into their own in the metal and hardcore scenes. Their newest creation, "As The Palaces Burn," has taken them on a tour trek all over, signed to a new label, Epic, and now co-headlining the first MTV2 Headbanger's Ball Tour. Let frontman Randy Blythe take you through some recording issues and where LoG is headed next.

SoundCheck Magazine: *"As the Palaces Burn."* I guess while you were recording, the war was coming and things were happening. Did a lot songs on the record come from that feeling of impending war and doom?

Randy Blythe: Yes it did. A lot of the songs were written before the shit hit the fan, even before September 11th. To us, though, when we got Bush in office, it doesn't take a genius or a fortune teller to see that something fucked up was going to happen. Of course that goes into your music; if you write about real situations and not Britney Spears bullshit, you're going to be affected by what's going on, the big picture in the world today, and that's certainly the big picture right now. Our economy is shit, we're at war with a nebulous enemy, and we have a monkey in a suit in the White House for a President. The Reagan era, had great punk rock bands come out of the states during that time. My roommate said when Bush came into office, "well at least it will be a good time for heavy music."

SCM: *There are a lot of great quality heavy bands that have come out. They are more forefronted too, bands like, Lamb Of God, Killswitch Engage, Shadows Fall, and a lot of other bands who might have been still underground are more mainstream now because the people want this heavy,*

aggressive music. There haven't been many CDs out this year that I didn't like.

RB: Heavy times call for heavy music. I keep getting new music on the road, even demos from bands that aren't signed and everybody is working real hard to craft the music intelligently. I think because the heavy and aggressive music has become more acceptable or more noticed that you can't make bullshit music, no one's going to listen to it, there are too many good bands to listen to bad stuff.

SCM: *You just got signed to Epic. What's the deal with them, in terms of control?*

RB: We have complete control over our music, our creative aspect of the band. Epic is such a big label, they have effin Michael Jackson, they aren't used to dealing with bands like us. They don't really understand us. So we were like, look it's fine that you don't understand us, just back us, let us do our thing, and sit back and watch. So as long as they don't try and stick their fingers in the mix and screw with our writing process or anything, then they are going to be O.K. If they do, which they promised that they won't, try to exert some kind of creative control, we will just say, "screw you."

SCM: *Can you do that?*

RB: Signing a deal does not mean endentured slavery and I'm not a slave. Epic doesn't have my soul. They bought out, we had one record left with Prosthetic, we signed with them one firm and two option, we did the one firm, *New American Gospel*, and started on the second option, *As the Palaces Burn*, and Epic had to buy out the last option. I think we got two firm and I'm not sure on how many options.

People are saying, "Oh you're going to get fucked and all this shit," and we're like no. If you're an 18 year old kid in a pop punk band who wants to be rich and doesn't understand the way the business works, yes, you're going to let industry people bully you around and stuff. We, however, are grown men and have been doing this for nine years and we aren't going to let anyone tell us how to do fucking anything.

SCM: *That's a good thing to hear, because you do hear about the bullying and the manipulation that some bands get handed. Especially when, like you said Epic doesn't know.*

RB: Yeah, but Morbid Angel was signed to major and put out their best record ever. It just depends on how you handle it. And no, we are not going to start sounding like Good Charlotte or anything. We already started writing songs for a new record and a couple will make you want to punch your Grandma in the face.

SCM: *You beat me to my next question, a new record in the works.*

RB: We're writing, right now we're geared up for the Headbanger's Ball Tour, but we have written, the vocals aren't done yet, but we got about three in the can. When we get off this tour, we are going to take about six months off and write our new record. If we are happy at the end of the six months, we'll go into the studio, record it, and if Epic is happy with it, they'll put it out. If Epic is not happy with it, who knows what will happen. But I think they are wise enough to know, and we have very good management, to just not fuck with us.

SCM: *Well that's great and I wish you luck with that. Now this is the first Headbanger's Ball Tour, and you are co-headlining with Killswitch Engage and Shadows Fall, who you have toured with before.*

RB: Yeah, and the two opening bands, God Forbid and Unearth, who are splitting the tour, we toured with them extensively. We've toured with Shadows Fall several times and done many shows with Killswitch Engage over the years. Everybody knows everybody, it's just going to be one big rolling party. It's going to be very bad for everyone's necks and livers.

SCM: *My neck hurts already. You're also on the Headbanger's Ball CD, how did that work? Because it's put out by Roadrunner and they have a ton of bands, including you, from other labels.*

RB: Well MTV brought the Headbanger's Ball TV show back and all the heavy bands along with it, they were like, we want to put out a comp. MTV doesn't own a label, Roadrunner is a larger indie metal label and said, fuck it, I'll put it out and MTV will get the art and put all the shit together and it's out.

SCM: *I think it's great that they did this comp and the tour, it gives a lot of exposure for the bands to people that might not have MTV2 and can't see Headbanger's Ball. This CD gives the masses those bands. I'm happy to see it all come together. ♡*

*The MTV2 Headbanger's Ball Tour is continuing now through December;
go to mtv.com or lamb-of-god.com for more info.*

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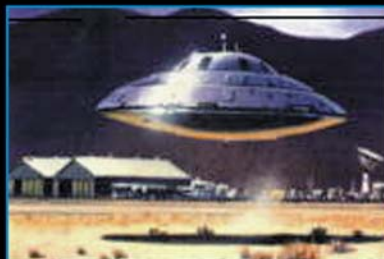
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PELT



You are about to hear from the oldest living rockers in the world. That's right, all the way from the Stone Age come the cavemen known as Pelt. Since their pre-Ice Age inception, they've seen millenniums of fads come and go - from generation to generation - and still are able to uphold the true meaning of the cavemen music: the creation of Rock as we know it today. Come learn from Pelt how the music began and how they learn many new things in this Modern Day World. So here's the setting: Real life cavemen and yours truly, at your local Barnes & Noble bookstore having coffee.

SoundCheck Magazine: *Where are you from?*

Pelt: Well, the modern day people call it Pangea. We call it Fu-saski, which became everything. I believe that Pangea came from perhaps a theology major. I use it for modern man benefit, we wanted you to understand in your language where we're from.

SCM: *You used caves to write music.*

Pelt: We etched music in caves. The good rock stuck with us, the other stuff we experimented with we etched in case we wanted to go back and try to make it better; we called it schlock, because it really wasn't that good. It was like we'll just etch this down here.

SCM: *What does schlock mean?*

Pelt: It's like a precursor to rock, like junk. It's bullshit really. Things were like, naw this isn't happening, this sucks, why don't we etch it down and come back to it. So that's what we did in the caves, but the good stuff like, "We Create Rock," is a pretty good one and it happened and stuck with us, we didn't need to etch it, it was just there in our brains. That was the first song we wrote.

SCM: *Explain what happened leading up to the landmass separating, which I assume is when the Stone Age*

ended.

Pelt: We filled up one cave with schlock and went searching for another cave to write more of these dumb ass ideas that we had done, we had to etch them into another cave, we were out of cave. When we went on that search, the landmass separated. Very sudden, a lot of people think that it happened over time.

SCM: *So what happened to you?*

Pelt: We were all in different parts. Knok stayed up on yonder hill. We kind of adapted to the modern world and he really never did. See yonder hill never became modern, it's just always been yonder hill and it's only been Knok up there.

Rhunda: I have been homeless for God knows how many years.

Flaytus: Me and Slab, built cities. We were a little more social than Knok, we searched other tribes and perpetuated the species.

SCM: *You had businesses, too, right?*

Flaytus: Yes, I did, a hair loss business, based in London. I'm a club member and the president.

Slab: I had my own yachting company.

SCM: *So how did you get back together?*

Flaytus: I was in New York on business and everyday would give this homeless guy my spare change, who turned out to be Rhunda, and on the last day of my trip, which happened to be Slab's first day of his trip, it was all just a coincidence, I didn't have change to give the homeless guy and he says, "Fu-saski," and it stopped me dead in my tracks and Slab heard it too and that could only be Rhunda Pelt. It had been millions of years for us.

SCM: *So when you reunited, how did that work out?*

Pelt: When Rhunda said Fu-saski, we knew at that instant. The three of us were there and heard the drums in the distance.

Slab: Something triggered in my memory, as soon as I heard that word, Fu-saski.

Flaytus: Slab instinctively knew the waterways that he took there originally, we knew our land trails that we took originally, we were able to link the two, our landmass ways turn into water where Slab took over.

SCM: *So you immediately started right back where you ended before the landmass separation. Is that what made you use the modern day device (CD), "Demonstration Wheel," so other people could hear Pelt?*

Pelt: Yeah, Rhunda ran into this guy Tim [Waltner] at Evos and after we made it back to Knok on the hill and got him back to show him the world, Tim put us in a studio and recorded us.

Slab: But nothing is like our live shows.

SCM: *Since you created rock, there must be a lot of artists that were influenced by Pelt.*

Pelt: Every artist. Beethoven, Bach. Bar Chord rock 'n' roll originated from us. Have you heard of the Raymones?

SCM: *You mean The Ramones.*

Flaytus: Yeah, they stole Rhunda's look and probably his sound, too.

Rhunda: They seemed like good guys.

SCM: *So you could say you are the forefathers of rock.*

Flaytus: We were four. Is that the number you use, Slab, Rhunda, Knok, Flaytus, yes four fathers.

Slab: There is another band something about a Voltage in their name.

Rhunda: Oh I think it's, DC, AC?

SCM: *AC/DC. They are still out playing.*

Flaytus: They did "Highway to Hell," right? Rip off, "Trail to Yonder Hill," they totally stole that.

SCM: *Well what's next for Pelt?*

Flaytus: The future is uncertain and the end is always near. Rhunda Pelt said that.

Rhunda: That's a scary thing. I think Jim Morris said it too.

SCM: *It's Jim Morrison from The Doors.*

Flaytus: Well we are going to play more shows. Get Knok up on yonder hill.

SCM: *Yeah, what's up with that, he's not adjusting to the modern way of life?*

Flaytus: What do you call that, culture shock? We kind of evolved and saw that change is coming and he never saw it. I think modern booze and modern ladies really freaked him out.

Rhunda: Yeah, it did.

Flaytus: But everyday is a new day and we take it step by step.

SCM: *O.K., I know "We Create Rock" was the first song, are the other songs on "Demonstration Wheel" from the cave days or are there some modern ones too?*

Pelt: There are some new ones like, "Modern Ladies."

SCM: *What do you think about modern music?*

Rhunda: Well since most have stolen from our schlock, it's gotten worse.

Slab: Well it's pretty hard to be authentic, when all these bands kind of sound like us.

Flaytus: Our caves were stumbled upon years ago and translations were done on all our etching and the music was written and recorded. But it's the schlock we had etched on the walls, not the good stuff, we had that all up in our brains.

Slab: So they reproduced the schlock and that's what you are hearing now.

SCM: *So was there anybody you took under your wing and said we are going to teach you the rock?*

Flaytus: Yeah, remember the original "Making of the Band"? O-Town, that was us. I think our next project would be SDecay, there one of the best bands I've seen in Boston.

SCM: *Let's end this with a few words describing Cave Rock, so that all of the modern day world can start to understand what is Pelt.*

Rhunda: Bar chord rock 'n' roll baby! 🎸

Catch Pelt live Saturday, November 15th at The Midway Cafe in Jamaica Plain with The Irreverends and The Downbeat 5. For any other info. go to peltbc.com.



KNOW YOUR INDUSTRY

By Karl Russo

Demo and Development Deals

BACK IN THE A&R INSTALLMENT, we touched on what a development or demo deal is. This month we're going to look at these deals more in depth. Before a major record label signs an artist to a multi-album deal they may offer the artist a demo or development deal in which the artist is contracted to record a demo usually consisting of two to five tracks. This gives the label a chance to see what the artist is made of before committing to a multi-record deal. It also allows the artist to see if he/she will fit in with the professionals at the label and give the artist a taste of what's to come. Essentially the two types of deals are the same thing except a development deal gives the A&R rep more time to work with the artist on things like identifying an image. Once the demo is recorded, the artist is obligated to deliver the demo and all rights of it to the label and sign with that label unless the label has decided not to opt to sign the artist in which case the artist is free to walk out the door with the demo with some restrictions, which we will discuss later.

DEMO DEAL CONTRACTS ARE FAR SHORTER IN LENGTH and are more cut and dry but are still as legally binding as any other contract. They consist of two parts. Part one states the conditions on the recording of the demo and part two describes the right that the label has to exercise its "option" to sign you. With regards to part one, the first element to be addressed is the advance. Demo deal advances are far less than that of multi-record deals, usually in the vicinity of \$5,000-\$10,000, give or take a few thousand. It is important to understand how the advance will be distributed. Will you receive it in one lump sum, which is the best scenario or will have been granted initially with the other half granted upon delivery of the demo. Be sure that your lawyers make it clear that if the remainder of the advance isn't granted within a specified amount of time after delivery of the record then the deal is breached. Upon completion of the demo you agree to not sign with any other label for a specified amount of time, usually 30-60. This gives the label time to decide if they want you or not. You should also understand that if they do sign you, where recording of your professional record will take place and with whom. Will it be in a label-affiliated studio or are you free to record with whomever you choose wherever you choose?

MOVING ON TO PART TWO OF THE DEAL we now discuss the label's option. This is basically their exclusive right to you and the demo should they decide to sign you. After the above-mentioned amount of time has expired and the label has notified you expressing the desire to sign you, you and your entourage have a period of 90 days to negotiate and sign a deal "in good faith." If a deal is not reached, the artist is free to record with whomever he/she chooses, subject to the original label's matching option. A matching option states that the original label has the right to match any other offer thrown on the table within a certain amount of time after the demo deal agreement was signed, usually up to a year. The artist is obligated to provide the terms of the new contract to the original label. If the label chooses to match the new offer, they must notify the artist within a certain number of days, usually 15, of receipt of the terms and conditions of the new contract. The artist must then sign with the original label. If timely notice is not given, then the artist is free to sign with anyone.

That'll do it for demo and development deals. Until next time...

Karl is a graduate of U Mass Lowell with a degree in Music Business and is available for further questions at kahl676@yahoo.com



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VADER
Blood/Reign Forever World

VADER continues to build their legacy with the new "BLOOD" mini CD. With the addition of tracks from VADER's "Reign Forever World" import only CD, the domestic release of "BLOOD" contains 16 tracks from Poland's metal pride. VADER hits U.S. shores on October 1st with label-mates AMON AMARTH plus NILE and KREATOR for the ART OF NOISE 2 U.S. TOUR.

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let yourself, but if you're willing just to let go it makes a huge difference and it sounds so small and stupid --

SCM: No it doesn't. Actually Justin, there was a reason I asked you this question and the reason was - and I'm arriving at the same thing is that you have to get to that point. I've done a bunch of dates recently - my band has played a lot with the Turbo ACs, who are constantly on the road; our friends Lost City Angels, we work with a lot of bands that have been touring more than we do, and I watch that exact behavior of acceptance for each other on the same team and that sort of how important really is it, I don't need to go to every fight I'm invited to because if you do, if you start to focus on that stuff, it gets to be a real bad time real fast, even in bands that play regionally let alone that are dragging their ass all over the country in a van half the year.

JS: Oh yeah, yeah. It's true and even with other bands I think what we maybe had conflicts with other bands in the past, we've been out with bands in the last couple of years that maybe some of the stuff they're doing like bums us out, but you know I think we all learned to let it go and say, Wow, that's their thing, let them do their thing and we'll stay out of it; and it almost is like mind your own business, man. Not everybody has to do what you're doing and live the way you're living. I think when we were younger in the past, those kinds of things got us into trouble and you really do have to learn to live and let live and I think that's an important lesson. I think some of us have in the past and some of us had to learn it the hard way.

SCM: What are the things about Anti-Flag that you most attribute to the band's survival over this period of time? You guys have had some pretty good staying power.

JS: I grew up in a family where it was a really activist family and it just made sense for me to play in a band like Anti-Flag because I was attending like anti-nuclear rallies and I was a little kid I remember this is kind of how I grew up. I can't really see myself doing anything else. I think that Pat was the same way. Neither of us, there wasn't really anywhere else we fit in or where we wanted to be or do; and whether we were broke and living in somebody's basement, which we've done, or whether we were making a living like we are now and we can afford to have our own place, those things were never really overly important to us. I think it's just where we belong. I think that's the main reason because we've been through some horrible things and it's just incredible to me, really - we had one tour where I had to be hospitalized; we had another tour where I just physically broke down, I couldn't finish the tour, the guys had to do three quarters of The Warped Tour without me. Countless bass players quit. Van problems, you name it. Things that I know would have killed other bands for some reason we were able to overcome them. I think more than anything it was just mine and Pat's attitude that well, this is bad but it's what we want to do. I don't know any other way of explaining it. ●



PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER



THE ACE OF BASS

By Alan Andrade

Artist Spotlight: Doug Wimbish

There are times in the world of music where a certain individual becomes so unique and original on their instrument that it's worth mentioning. As bass guitarists we know the impact our instrument has had and will continue to have for as far as we can imagine. Though we are wildly recognized as a foundational and supportive instrument there have been quite a few artists that have made musical "waves" on the bass. One such artist is Doug Wimbish. Currently touring with the highly talented and diverse group Living Colour, Doug Wimbish has been creating his own legacy for years. A New England native (Connecticut), Doug has performed with so many top artists in the studio and on the road. Originally a member of the Sugar Hill Records house band, Doug laid down the bottom for so many of that label's great hits. He's worked with Madonna, Bruce Springsteen, Seal, Busta Rhymes, Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger, and more. A first-call session musician Doug has traveled the world and fulfilled a musician's dream in his career. A very impressive history makes him worth mentioning but what really makes me appreciate him is his music. Doug Wimbish is ALWAYS pushing the envelope, creating and originating. His desire to respect originality all the while realizing the style of music he's involved in. His intelligent but fearless experimental use of effects is inspiring (check out "Trippy Notes for Bass"). His muscular and deep grooves will shake a building apart and his virtuoso technique will make you think about hanging it up and selling insurance. Coming around full circle Doug still continues to work with any artist that he feels he can create with. The freedom he is allowed in Living Colour along with their new tour and album is heaven sent. Hopefully Doug Wimbish, after researching some of his work if you already aren't familiar with him, will inspire you to keep the creative juices flowing and to work hard for what you want. He is a rare and precious commodity in today's modern music and an all around pro. Rock on Doug! Check out Doug Wimbish and Living Colour on their new tour to promote their newest release in years, *Collidescope*, November 12 at the Avalon. Also check out dougwimbish.com for more info.

Check out Living Colour's "Cult of Personality". Even though it's not an original Doug Wimbish line he does add his style and power to this song live giving it some extra pizzazz....!!

Main hook Unison with guitar

G:-----
D:---3-0---2---3-0---2---3-0---2---3-0---2-2---
A:-----
E:--3---3---3---3---3---3---3---3---3-----

Main hook with fill

G:-----2-----
D:---3-0---5-3-0---3-0---3-0---2---3-0---2---
A:-----3-2-----
E:--3---3---3---3---3---3---3---3-----

IM THE CULT OF PERSONALITY PART ALTERNATES BETWEEN F AND C

G:-----
D:-----
A:-1-----THEN SECOND TIME---1---3-----
E:---1-----

Send me your questions or feedback via e-mail at: tuaze@yahoo.com



SPOTLIGHT THE SINGER

By Jeannie Deva

Taking Control of Your Monitor Mix

Ever had to sing in a club when you could not hear yourself through your monitor? First of all, what you don't do is panic or get "freaked off." And you probably know, if you concentrate too much on trying to hear yourself, chances are, you'll start to push harder, your throat will start to tense, and you'll sound strained and possibly off-key to the audience. What's the deal with this anyway?

Pretty much all the other musicians in the band have their own volume knobs and can adjust their stage volumes. But you are dependent on a sound person who can't hear what you hear on stage, and may be facing certain sound system limitations because of the feedback threshold. You can take full control of these situations by assembling your own monitor setup, giving you access to your own volume knobs and vocal mix! Ever dreamed you could?

SETTING UP THE BASICS

To accomplish this, you'll need a small mixer and amplifier, which you can set up on a rack on stage. You can get these as separate components or together as a powered mixer. Next you'll need a splitter. This has a built-in transformer to keep the signal intact. Your microphone plugs into the input. It has two outputs, one of which goes to your monitors and the other to the main sound board. You can special order one from some of the major mike manufacturers, or check out the MS-3 by Pro-Co.

MICROPHONE CHOICES

Stage and club noise picked up by your microphone are big contributors to feedback squeal. In order to avoid feedback without sacrificing volume, you'll need the right microphone and a noise-gate. A high-output, unidirectional microphone is most sensitive when faced directly in front of your mouth. The sides and back end are least sensitive, thus lessening the amplification of extraneous room and stage sounds. Recommended microphones are the Shure SM 58 or Beta 58; Beyer TG-X480 or TG-X580; the Electro-Voice N/DYM Series, or Peavy's PVM 580 TN. Try out each to determine which works best for your voice.

PUT A LID ON FEEDBACK

The noise gate should really put a lid on feedback problems. For those unfamiliar with it, adjusting its sensitivity allows it to open only when you're singing into the microphone. The gate otherwise stays closed and shuts out the stage and room noise. One such model on the market is the DBX 463X.

Another piece of equipment assisting in the reduction of feedback as well as enhancing the electronic representation of your voice, is the equalizer. There are two types: The graphic or the parametric equalizer. The parametric is better, as it allows you to reduce or boost selected portions of the entire sound frequency spectrum. Though this one takes longer to set up, it allows you to cut the frequencies that are feeding back, without reducing the presence of your voice. The graphic EQ clumps sections of the sound spectrum in groups, and as a result is less selective. If you do get a graphic EQ, remember that the more bandwidths it has, the more precise you can be. One with 30 bands will give you more control and less presence loss compared to one with only 10 or 15 broader bands. A relatively inexpensive Parametric EQ is the AMR PM.

IMPROVING THE SOUND SIGNAL

If you want to take this all the way, the next step in the improvement of your setup is to improve the quality of the sound-signal that is getting through. Your voice, being an acoustic instrument, loses some of its quality when reproduced electronically. An enhancer helps your voice sound more natural. First on the market was the Aphex Aural Exciter. Barcus-Berry Electronics (BBE) has one called a "sonic maximizer." [Note: if you get the BBE 401 enhancer, you won't need to get a separate mixer.] Signal processing is your final addition. Digital reverb and delay give your voice back the acoustic quality so often lost through the wires. Alesis and Yamaha models have good ones.

Now you are completely independent! If you want to turn up, you can do so without feedback, and feel satisfied with the sound of your voice coming through the monitors. Being able to hear yourself and liking what you hear, does wonders for throat relaxation and overall improvement of the sound of your voice and the band. You may think it's a lot to do and may cost more than you can afford. Look for used gear and sales at large music store chains. Is it time to take control?

Jeannie Deva is the founder of Jeannie Deva® Voice Studios www.JeannieDeva.com

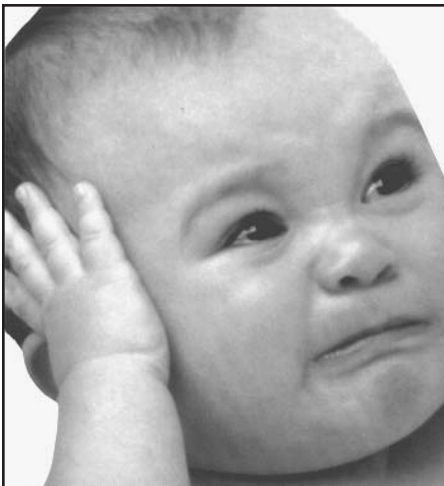


DOES YOUR MOTHER KNOW YOU DO THIS?

By Joel Simches

Episode 23: It's All Been Done Before

Let's face it. In Western music there are 12 tones, sequenced into a finite amount of melodies, over a finite amount of chord progressions. After centuries of popular music, there is little that hasn't been done before. How can one avoid being derivative when the world is awash in a sea of musical genres and possibilities? The Beatles, The Stones, and The Who took R&B, cockneyed it up and then spit it back to us as the British invasion. American blues made Clapton "God." Theatrics made Alice Cooper a legend in his own right. KISS used to write songs around their massive light shows. David Bowie is just David Bowie. You can change your look, change the key, add some clever wordplay, and most importantly, use your own unique personality to put a spin on the aging dog of rock and roll. Your personality and attitude can keep any genre from getting stale. There is, after all, only one YOU! The harder your influences are to spot, the more original your songs will seem to be. As stated way back in Episode 1, "adding your own interpretations and personal style will help you become more than just the sum of your own influences." If you choose to wear your influences on your sleeve, try an homage. Keeping it "tongue in cheek" will keep your songs from sounding derivative, and might actually allow you and your bandmates have more fun with the music you create. Try not to take it too seriously, after all, It's all been done before.



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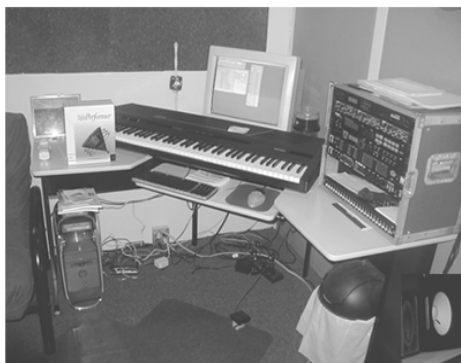


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Songwriter's Corner

By Andrea McPhee

can scare me/Like Christopher Walken/Scariest man alive, Christopher Walken/Everyone run and hide/Christopher Walken." Aside from being the catchiest tune on the album, I liked this one the best because I have to agree with her, Christopher Walken is mighty scary.

DEEP C

Play By Ear

deepcee.com

You can't judge a CD by its cover, but in the case of singer/songwriter, Deep C, the cover pretty much tells all. He is a longhaired, scruffy looking hippy; sitting, guitar in hand; in front of a blurred, psychedelic, colorful background...needless to say this record is ultra mellow and ultimately a good disc to listen when...relaxing. In a nutshell, his songs are too long to keep my attention. The musicianship is superb, but he averages about six minutes a song, which leads me to thoughts about what I'm going to eat when this over because I'm getting hungry. The last track, "Long Way Home," runs a whopping nine minutes and 11 seconds...zzzz...Oh, what, is this song still going? Mmm, dinner: "If it were my decision/I'd sleep outside the pace," he drones. If it were my decision, your song would have ended five minutes ago. This tune turns into a very canorous jam session, which I appreciated, but soon got bored with. His songs contain one to many "doo-doo"s, "ooh-oh-oh"s, and non-verbal dribbling. I would have enjoyed less gibberish and more lyrics. "My mind wanders in circles/There's so much to say," Deep C sings. Obviously,



JAY SANTA

(Mixed Emotions Studio)

jaysanta.com

Jay Santa's self-titled debut album is reminiscent of a down-trodden, less bloody, Andrew W.K. When most think of a singer/songwriter, folk music and acoustic guitars are the prevalent thought. But Santa has taken a different spin on this genre. Drums, electric guitar, and a bass all accompany Santa, making him an unusual singer/songwriter. He is rocker with accompanying musicians, however, they aren't a band. He is pulling an Avril Lavigne only he plays an instrument. According to Santa, partying, booze, and chicks are all you really need to have a good time. Seems plausible. His disc would definitely be a big hit at any given frat party because, if nothing else, it is a good disc to drink beer to. "There's a party across town and they've got a band/You get directions and then you're on your way," sings Santa. "You got to live, love, and party your life away." That's right people. Take this man's advice, and you will be successful in all of your future endeavors. Santa is a generic, mediocre "rock" musician. He was going for a gruff, bad-ass, mainstream party disc, however, he fell short and ended up just being slightly annoying, mainly bad, and the only party I had was when I turned it off. "Just take one shot of tequila/Mix it with one can of beer/Now all you need is a party/That's the recipe of the year." Thank you Jay.



HEIDI STONE

Cup

heidistone.com

Umm...I think she is female because her name is Heidi and I'm looking at a picture of her and she is very clearly a woman. But when I put the disc into my player, I heard this deep manly sounding voice exuding from my speakers. So I take the CD out thinking that perhaps I put the wrong CD in. Alas, it wasn't the wrong CD, Heidi Stone just sounds like a man! My bad. After the initial "is it a boy? Is it a girl?" shock, I started to get into her sound. Stone combines a unique mixture of jazzy blues, funk, and folk music that make her songs flow with a natural ease. Her guitar playing is excellent in all of her songs and something to be envied by even the best musicians. The tune "Billboards For God," truly showcases her guitar playing ability and moves the song forward with a mellow yet excited urgency. My favorite song on this disc is "Scary (Christopher Walken)." She sings, "Scary, scary, nobody



KATIE BARBATO

The Tapestry Room

katiebarbato.com

Katie Barbato has a crystal clear voice, a strong cadenced backup, and a folk rock sound that is impossible to ignore. She has everything she needs for an amazing and intense album. "The Tapestry Room" is Barbato's third release and in my opinion, it is the best. This album is upbeat and cheery but also showcases her dejected angsty lyrics. "I'll burn all the records/Just leave me alone and free/Cuz I never fell from grace/And I don't have to sleep to drive/Leave all your wishes at my door," Barbato sings. The upbeat poppy guitar jumps in the background along with Barbato's voice giving Track 1 titled, "00:00," an uplifting feeling while rocking with a solid drumbeat at the chorus. She has everything it takes, but most of all, the girl has talent. She will make it with the band or on her own, but she will make it after all!



THE AMPLIFIER

ROCKTOPUS Something Fierce

If I had ever imagined a band called Rocktopus, I never would have thought they'd sound this way. This band sounds far from your typical rock band. They sound very dancey, very '70s and oftentimes, very cheesy. Essentially the album has two types of songs; energetic, '80s style synth tunes like "Saturday Night," and lame arena rock songs like "Suit and Tie" whose guitar riff is almost identical to Bad Company's "Feel Like Making Love." Fans of upbeat songs that suit a disco club's playlist will enjoy this album. The musicianship is definitely here, it's just a question of if you enjoy music this nostalgic. [Editor's note: That's exactly what I'd expect from a band called Rocktopus. - JM]



- Johnny Gaffney

AVANT STRANGEL avantstrangel.com

"...A growing wave of black rock players creeping onto the scene... there are classical, blues, funk, and reggae influences..." Yup. It says that on the enclosed info sheet. We've got one very good looking gentleman here with that sparkly scarf over his head while he holds his gorgeous blue guitar. Second song is a reggae like-type version of George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." He changes up the chords a bit and makes the vocal his own. He included the lyrics to two songs that, I'm guessing, are original compositions. Opening cut "Lil Sista" is pretty good but I like "Nana... (Waiting on the Shore)" better. There are only four songs; too bad. I like his style and his guitar playing. It's a nice package all around though the sound of the recordings is lacking a bit. I also wish we got more info, but what the hell, he lets the music do the talking.

- L.A. Joe

NUTURED IN PURPLE

Uh oh. Run for the hills. It's wicked evil hard rock with wicked evil guitar licks and a doo-doo recording ethic. Other than that, it's just great. Got four fine looking fellers playing their guitars and drums and singing their songs. First song "Day By Day" has a cool, repetitive chorus and some fine wah-guitah; reminds me of Slash's playing (just a bit). I'm loving the third song "Starting Over." Through the performance is loose, the



energy and lyrics put it over the top. Guy's got a good voice and the bass sound is cool. This one's more up and pop than aforementioned wicked evil opener just might be something here with some seasoning.

- L.A. Joe

SARAH FIMM A Perfect Dream sarahfimm.com

So we've got this beautiful, angelic-looking girl, hey wait a minute. Is her name a play on the word "Seraphim"? (That's an angel like-type being) O.K., so much for hilarity. Sarah writes 'em and sings 'em and plays all the keyboards as well. She's got half a dozen folks helping her out on guitars, drums, horns, and such. It's moody stuff; dark with lots of spacy synths and sombre lyrics sung with her sultry delivery. I'd say its more preternatural than witchy. The enclosed info sheet mentions such diverse influences as Tori Amos, Alice In Chains, and Nine Inch Nails. They describe her music as "...erotically-charged music-meets-art..." Sounds about right. Titles: "Alien Boys," "Spit Trap Ghetto" with its avante-sounding solo bits and jazzy feel, "In The Red," "Seti," and "Shadows and Dust."

- L.A. Kahn



CLARA LOFARO Night Light claralofaro.com

Clara's from Canada. She's a Berklee grad and she's a wonderful singer and a most excellent composer. I suppose the material falls into the "Easy Listening" category, but she's got a funky side as evidenced by songs like "I Want To Make You Love" and then she's got a lighter, almost folky facet to her writing, for example "Hey Love (It's Alright)." She's got a dozen folks playing these wonderful arrangements and the recording and production are absolutely top-notch. May I quote from the enclosed info sheet: "...the musicianship and smarts of her great contemporaries from Sting to Ani DiFranco to Sarah McLachlan and Meshell Ndegeocello." So that's the general bag. Other titles: "Don't Want To Love You," "Water Song," "Made," and "Chardonnay" with its funk-out groove and pads mysterioso. Impressive.

- L.A. Joe



SOUNDCHECKMAG.NET

FETISH CHICKEN

American Chop Suicide

<http://fetishchicken.tripod.com>

Well, let's start with the second song (!), and I use the term loosely. Whacked out, annoying synth FX and a bunch of folks yammering - mostly incoherently - then we break into a section with someone sort-of singing and it's all just a mess honestly. I think it's called "Progressions," though it's tough to read the chalk-on-hot top looking list of songs on the back of the CD. We do eventually drop into some rather poorly written Marilyn Manson sounding krappe with guitars and drums blah blah blah. Now I'm all for avant garde and experimentation whether it's for art or fun. I'm just not caring for these songs and the horrible recording. All that said, have a ball, keep making music (!) and send us your next. I'd list some more songs but I can't read the titles.

- L.A. Huh?



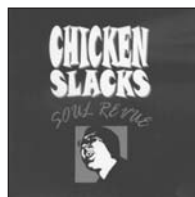
CHICKEN SLACKS

Soul Review

chickenslacks.com

Boy, I don't want to tell you how long ago I was in a band that played these "Soul Review" favorites. Suffice to say it was a long time ago. It's an authentic sounding five-member band: guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, and an excellent lead vocalist. They list about 60 songs, all covers, as their repertoire. Among them, classic hits by Otis Reading, James Brown, Wilson Pickett, Sam and Dave, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, and many more. It's a great sounding band and if I hired them, I'd want the optional three-piece horn section to come along. Toonz: "Knock On Wood," "Show Me," "I Got You (I Feel Good)," and "If You Need Me." Nice job.

- L.A. Joe



YTBR

Lovely Enough to Destroy

Man that's a thin and cheesy sounding CD. Now I'm liking all that distortion on everything, including the vocal occasionally, but I've got three words for you: "harsh, harsh, and harsh." And that means ear fatigue and that means people change to another station and that means no CD sales... well, you get the point. The reason that's all-a-down is that I really like the songs, the lead vocalist, and this band's post-punk R&R angst. Yup, good songs and nice guitar bitz. They refer to it on the enclosed info sheet as "sweet high energy Rock 'n' Roll." You can get all that nice crunch without the harshness: little EQ, little analog, couple two-tree mic pre's. Toonz: "Happy Enough To Destroy,"



"Ass In A Sling," "Do My Damnedest," and "21st Century Stupid Discharge."

- L.A. Joe

ALL PARALLELS

You Won't Feel A Thing

allparallels.com

Lead vocalist has that delicious looseness like that guy in the Black Crowes. (Forgive me; can't think of his name, but I know he married Goldie Hawn's daughter.) I'm loving the guitar sound and the drummer. Pretty good riffs and licks and bitz. "Load A Gun and Kill Me" is one of the best of the five songs. The lead singer sounds great, the song is hooky and it's loaded up with way too much energy for one CD. I think it could be a contender if they played that full-band guitar hook thang a little more. Wish we had a picture, but the CD info tells me there are three folks playing this contemporary sounding rock stuff. Other titles of note: "That'll Never Be Me," "Hex," and "Nymphomaniac" with its gorgeous bass and guitar sounds.

- L.A. Joe



FORCE 1

Alpha EP 1

jiveturkeyproductions.com

The first song's chorus or hook keeps repeating "Can you feel it?" Honestly, I can't and I'm a fan. Though there are a couple of interesting loops, for instance, the one behind "Savage World," I'm not feeling the grooves and the home-grown sounding recording doesn't help matters any. What we do have is three fine looking young fellers and some pretty good lyrics. Their voices sound fine as well, thought one of them sort of overemphasizes things a bit much for my taste: sounds forced. Other titles: "Break," "Brave New World," and "Blazing Candles." I think some world-class grooves and the right producer/engineer would do them proud. Time to kick it up a notch. There's lots of competition out there. Are you MTV ready? Gotta be.

- L.A. Joe

MASS HYSTERIA

Waiting For The Day

masshysteriaband.com

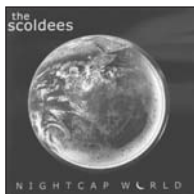
We got thee ska mahn. Big time island style. Yup, it's an eight-member outfit with the usual suspects in the rhythm section, a girl singing a lot of the lead vocals, and three horns. They've also got a couple friends who helped out on keyboards and hand drums. I'm gonna quickly skip over the fact that things are a bit out of tune, and we hit those compressors a bit too hard on a number of things. That said, it's a pretty good sounding CD. She's got a decent voice, the songs are decent and the drummer's got a good feel. I'm particularly liking that room ambience on the drums on cut six "Luper-



calia" though it's not the best vocal take of the bunch. Other titles: "Please Please Please," "Close To Home" with its conga groove, and lastly "If I Ran Away."

- L.A. Decent

THE SCOLDEES
Nightcap World
scoldees.com



Man how eye luvs dem melotron. It's a tape-driven keyboard o' the '60s and '70s that has a lush and distinctively creepy sound. If they're not using one, perhaps it's sampled. Anyway, what the hell am I lingering on that for? Oh yeah - it begins song number one "Cocoon" as well as forming its droning pad. It's a four-piece band with a girl singing lead and man is she good. The sound of the CD/engineering is absolutely wonderful; my compliments. The drums are tight, the horns are crisp, the wah-guitar and harmonica on the third song "Nightcap World" are exemplary. Got a guy singing that title cut with his cool delivery, then the girl comes in on the lazy chorus. It's commercial stuff, very mainstream and on the lighter side: Think Dave Matthews though that's a stretch. The production ideas and selection of keyboard, guitar and percussion sounds, are as good as it gets. Other titles: "American Tonight," "Rain," "Figure It Out," and "The Valley."

- L.A. Joe

NOW IS NOW
Transitions
(A Lot of Records)
nowisnow.com

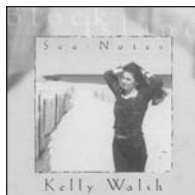


Now is Now really should be named Then to Now as it feels like this CD, "Transitions," evolved through time. Though the opening track, "Daydream," was a song highlighted in the band's press material - and it IS a terrific song - it's a bit dated-sounding; kind of has a late '80s rock vibe to it. But keep reading..."Transitions" is an appropriate CD title as when I reached the halfway point, "Sail Away," the album took a different turn: Now is Now developed into more of a contemporary acoustic/singer/songwriter band. Lovely, folksy, introspective...my ears and opinion were swayed with "Sail Away" and I remained on this ride for the remainder of the album. Oh lest you think Now is Now is all lite twang pop, the song "Heaven Helps," a delicious, heavier rock tune, kicks that image right out the window. The warm acoustic side returns in "Dawn" and "Young Man" and I was captivated by the instrumental "Transitions." I wish the CD began with Track 4 for from there onward, this Maine-based band made a strong impression. I still recommend picking this up - excellent production as well.

- Debbie Catalano

SOUNDCHECKMAG.NET

KELLY WALSH
Sea Notes
kellywalsh.com



Rock, pop, punk, and folk have all been used to describe Kelly Walsh's music....now Kelly can add country to the list. At least in my opinion, a decided country feel resonates through most of the nine songs in "Sea Notes." Of course, shades of her diversified background flash through as well, so it's not pure country and, in fact, that word is not used in her bio at all - but there's no hiding nor denying the sound of the twang! Not all the tunes carry that sound, however; the opening track, "Don't Praise The Sun" is reminiscent of the material on Kelly's last CD, "Cinderella Stories" - graceful, flowy pop; while "Hercules" slants more to contemporary singer/songwriter/folk. But from the sassy rocker "Anymore," "Sea Notes" kicks into a rootsy mode. Although I have to say one of my favorite tracks, "Big Ideas" reveals Kelly's punk side - a memorable rocker that smashes all her genre sides into one solid tune. O.K., so I take back what I said earlier - country makes an appearance on the list of Kelly's style incorporations - but all in all though it didn't entrance me as much as "Cinderella Stories," Kelly Walsh still delivered an excellent recording. P.S. Impressive-looking press kit!

- Debbie Catalano

XIAN
The Gift
mindsnappromotions.com



Dramatic, long (76 minutes), trippy, meditative - words that surfaced in my mind after hearing Xian's 17-song disk "The Gift." This is not a collection of radio tunes; rather it seems to feel like a personal compilation of this artist's/band's (?) songs - some are haunting and hypnotic; others seem almost theatrical. My favor tended to lean towards the percussive, dreamy instrumental tunes. The recording is not polished - neither are the vocals, but the feel is genuine. It's the type of recording you'll either lose yourself in or lose interest in - depending on your taste and mood. For me, because of the mix of instrumentals (which I loved) and vocal tracks, my interest was held, my mind wandered, got a little spaced out.....sorry, got a little over-mesmerized there. Anyway, it's a light-up-some-incense-and-let-your-mind-go CD.

- Debbie Catalano

UNCLE BILLY'S SMOKEHOUSE
www.unclebillysmokehouse.com

Yet another band/CD that shows flashes of inspired genius and yet somehow manages to muck it all up. I don't even know where to start here. I suppose the best way to explain this is to say that UBS is lacking a single direction. The promo kit makes them look like a "jam



band" and the CD backs this up a little bit—in Jody Ryan's tunes. (Some of this really could rival the Allmans—AWESOME Dickie Betts-ish tone and leads!) Sean Ryan's compositions, on the other hand, are less inspired. They border on emotionless '80s

stuff (production?) and really seem to weaken the CD. Sorry, Sean, I call 'em like I see 'em. I know what it's like to have "battling brothers" in a band—extremely difficult at best—but they need to at least agree upon one voice and one direction. I'm not saying to discount one person's ideas; I AM saying, though, that if you cannot share a single vision then you are lost. I think a sit-down is in order? Good luck, guys!

- Smash

RANDOM ACTS OF VIOLENCE
Unleashing
(Hamfist Records)
randomactsofviolence.com

No, Mr. Bacharach, what the world needs now is not love, sweet love. What it really needs is Random Acts of Violence. Anyone who misses the heyday of thrash will absolutely love this band. I'm talking Anthrax "State of Euphoria." Suicidal Tendencies "How Will I Laugh Tomorrow..." Exodus "Impact is Imminent." Great thrashy riffs, strong vocals,



the whole package. This band has got it. For those of you who did not live in the era of thrash: It was a time when songs were fast and triumphant. You needed at least six parts with bridges before you could even think about calling something a song. Jean jackets with patches. High-top sneakers. Unrelenting rock. Go buy "Unleashing" and make RAOV superstars. They are sorely needed.

- Shawn Macomber

DAN MILLER
The Gift
www.danmillersite.com



What do you say about a guitar virtuoso that did all the recording, in his living room, and played every instrument? Dan Miller is the answer. I can't believe the quality of sound and production on The Gift, it is far better than a lot of studio recordings and productions I've been privy too. The Gift is heavy and intricate along with beautiful melodies. Dan's haunting voice is a treat, this New Hampshire guy he done good. So much metal for one to handle, some old school, some nu. Track #4, "Design," has great solos and the rhythm fits nicely in a neat package. Instrumental Track #7, "The First Gate," is great work. You don't see instrumentals very often anymore, so I find it quite refreshing. The artwork is done well in the booklet, which also has all the lyrics. In my opinion, Dan Miller has that quality of music

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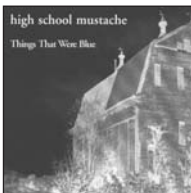
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that can mix well with a lot of different genres, including hardcore or even death metal. I believe fans of those types would appreciate what Dan does. Listen I could go on and on about Dan Miller's, The Gift - not necessary. Metal Wench says it's a great CD.

- Metal Wench

HIGH SCHOOL MUSTACHE
Things That Were Blue
(Hilltop Records)
highschoolmustache.com



Oh, jeez...more aimlessly wandering singer/songwriter stuff. This one sounds sort of like Pink Floyd "Meddle" -album stuff without a purpose. The out-of-tune Keith Richards-on-the-nod vocals aren't working, either. It says this contains recordings from 1973-today? Whoa! Frankly, I'm finding it difficult to get past the surface and hear what the words actually say. I suppose that towards the end there's some nice background/atmospheric music here, but that was probably not the intent. Sorry, guys, keep trying to let that mustache grow in; it's ain't there yet.

- Smash

SBGB
Ate Your Pizza
(Average Day Productions)
geocities.com/sbgbpunks



You had me and you lost me! Dammit! I mean, it's not THAT bad, but it sure was disappointing. 21 tunes on this CD and if you'd have ditched 4 or 5 of them, then this would be an absolute classic. MORE IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER! I cannot emphasize this enough—in all aspects of life! Just because you wrote it doesn't make it good and just because you recorded it doesn't mean it should be on the CD. O.K.? Tracks 4, 14, 15, & 20 should all be gone. On the whole, though, this is great punk rock: attitude to spare, genre-perfect production, grinding guitars, melodic hooks, memorable lines, and often-insightful commentary! "Fuck this, fuck that; everything, everyone..." (from "Jaded") is waaay PC ("PUNK Correct"). Love it! "The Pope Was a Punk"? Sweet! "Fucking Fuck"? Wicked pissa! You've got lightning in a jar, boys, don't let it go! Total side note: is it sbgb, SbGB, sbGB, SBGB, or what? You're all over the place on this. Does it matter? Some people cop attitude on this stuff...if you can't stick with one yourselves then don't get your panties in a bunch when other people can't figure it out, O.K.? Keep it up, boys! I'll be there at a live show when you least expect it...

- Smash

SOUNDCHECKMAG.NET

ELGIN JAMES
For Carol...
(Lonesome Recordings)
lonesomerecordings.com



Sometimes music will just plug directly into my heart, making a direct connection with my emotions. What's even more powerful is when it's a brand-new act to me...and in a first listen. You know where this is leading - Elgin James' CD "For Carol..." did just that. So affecting - it warned and wrenched my heart for 40 minutes. Eglin, who formerly fronted bands like Wrecking Crew and The Jaded Salingers, sings every word of his poetry-like lyrics like he's expressing this emotion for the first time - that's how raw and real he comes across. From songs about growing up to love - most of which are broken tales on both accounts - Elgin sets the mood and touches the listener and he does this equally in the tunes that are acoustic-y/singer/songwriter as he does in the rock numbers. Speaking of which, the rocking tunes strike the perfect balance of sounding mainstream and radio-friendly while FEELING indie, even punk at times. Wow...Elgin James, I do FEEL your words...you touched my heart.

- Debbie Catalano

HENRY
Cyanide
henry-site.com



This is what hip is...cool...dark...beats...Images of the Velvet Underground, percussion, smooth bass, and punk waft a smoky vibe. I dug this a lot and have almost little more to say - which is good. Led by the Mark Sandman-like vocals of Don Gould, accompanied by the groovy bass and drums of Tom Rasku and Brian Toomey, Henry possess that beat poetry, introspecting underground rock feel. I haven't heard a CD like this in a while, so it felt good to hear this one. "Cyanide" is a mood-setting, laidback, collection of eight tracks that holds this element of artistry and depth. Maybe it's time again to take a walk on this side...the beat that Henry's setting.

- Debbie Catalano

YEAH YEAH YEAHS
Fever To Tell
(Interscope)



Great sounding trio. Got a girl up front singing, a drummer and a guy playing guitar and drum machine. Yup, no bass; it's a new trend. They've got some crunchy EQ and distortion on her voice and it really sets the band apart from some of the other White Stripes clones. First song "Rich" is right out of pop heaven. It's radio-ready, as are many of their songs. It's well written stuff throughout. This band is scoring high in the three

most important categories. Top of the list is "How are the songs?" As I mentioned, great songs. Then, "How is the lead vocalist?" If you don't have a great vocalist, is the vocal distinctive at least? We've got a very distinctive vocalist; great delivery, loaded with energy. Lastly, "How does the act look?" Again, we've got three young folks with a contemporary look. I'm so happy happy. Other titles: "Black Tongue," "No, No, No," "Y Control," and "Date with the Night."

- L.A. Yes

PRIMUS

Animals Should Not Try To Act Like Humans
(Interscope Records)

Four years after the release of "Antipop," Primus is back with "Animals Should Not Try To Act Like People." The band sounds good, and they haven't changed their formula at all. The music still revolves around Les Claypool's complex bass lines and his unmistakable voice and lyrics. The album's strongest song is definitely "Mary the Ice Cube." The song is centered around Larry Lelonde's dreamy guitar line, and one of the few Primus songs where Claypool's bass isn't front and center at all times. There's not much significantly different about this album compared to Primus's former albums. They sound good as usual, but those who dislike the band's signature style will find be bothered by the same characteristics as the band's past work.

- Johnny Gaffney


LO PRO

(413 Records/Geffen Distribution)

It's quite nice to see Aaron Lewis giving back to the music community. What does that mean you ask? Well here's the lowdown, or should I say Lo Pro. It's kind of like a super-group, Peter Murray and Neil Godfrey formerly of Ultraspunk, John Fahnestock formerly of Snot, Tommy Stewart formerly of Godsmack, and Pete Ricci Staind's former guitar tech. Mr. Lewis has got his own Geffen distribution, cleverly entitled 413 Records, and with help from bandmate Mike Mushok, has given some local friends their first signing. Whew, there you have it. This self-titled CD is the first off 413 and I already have Track #3, which is also the single, "Sunday," in my head and really digging it. Crunchy guitars, great bass heaviness, drums you cannot miss, and vocals that capture and keep you there the whole way through. Track #6, "Walk Away," had vocal production by none other than Korn frontman Jonathan Davis and I can definitely hear that presence. Track #8, "Oblivion," is a pretty love song with some nice melodies. Overall, I would have to say Lo Pro has taken the talents of all five guys and combined them very nicely. Some of you may have seen them at Locobazooka recently and already picked up the CD, for the rest of you, I suggest you do so.

- Stephanie Marino






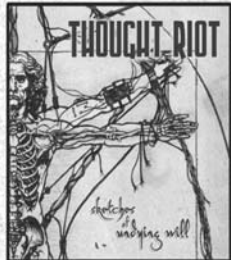
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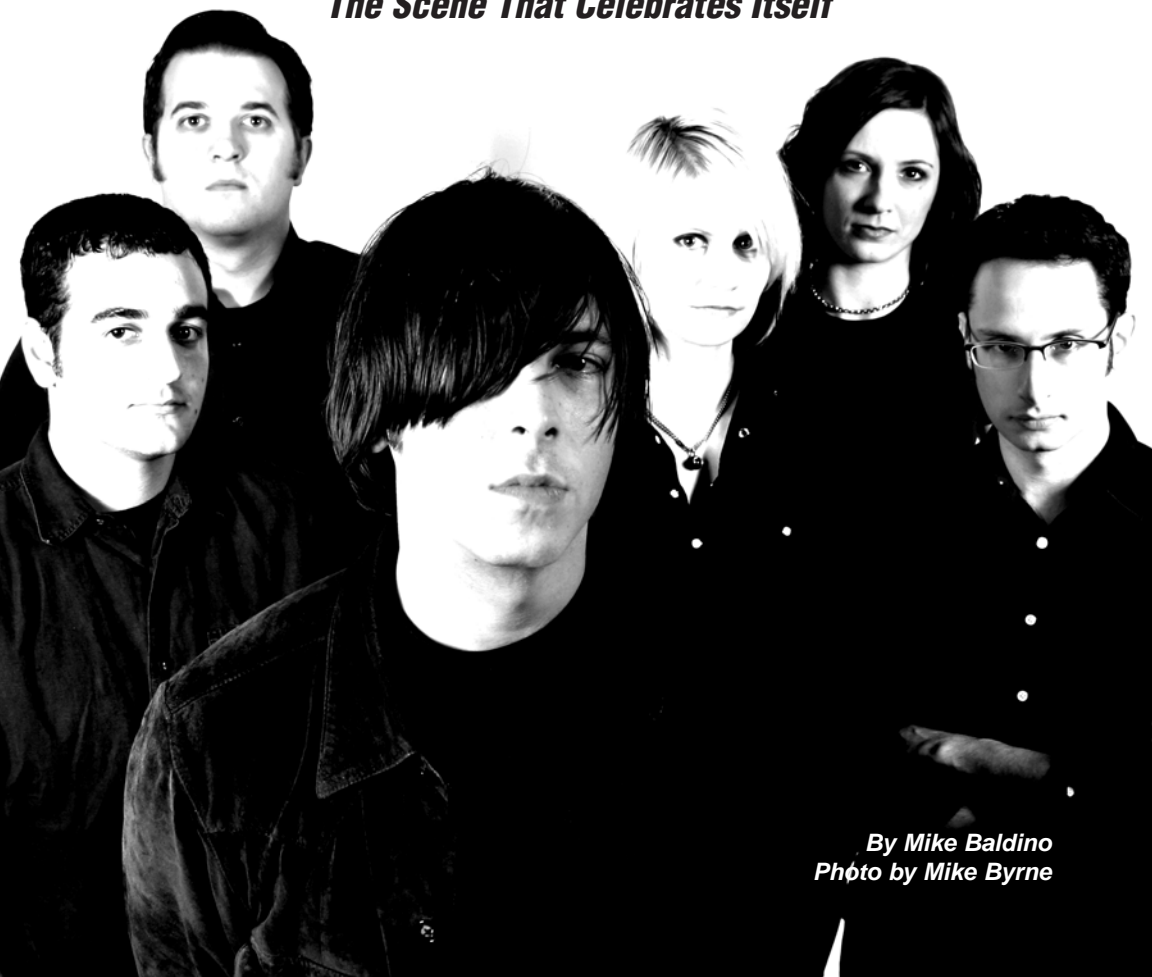


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THE INFORMATION

The Scene That Celebrates Itself



*By Mike Baldino
Photo by Mike Byrne*

The Information sprang seemingly out of nowhere earlier this year, graduating from a sold-out Monday night debut gig at Charlie's Kitchen in March to a Saturday night bill at the Middle East upstairs in October, which is no mean feat in a city as fiercely competitive as Boston. Zach Wells (guitar), Heath Fradkoff (bass), Deb Grant (guitar), Max Fresen (vocals), Brad Kayal (drums), and Ashley Moody (keyboards) have an alluringly detached stage presence and immediately appealing songs that combine shoegaze-y swirling guitars with New Wave-inspired pop hooks and a healthy dollop of post-hardcore aggression that sounds not unlike Hot Snakes covering Interpol. They've self-released an EP and contributed songs to compilations by The Pill and the Traktor7 label and are currently at work recording a full-length album for a February release. I had a talk with the exceptionally articulate Mr. Fresen:

SoundCheck Magazine: *Who are your favorite frontmen, and what makes them great?*

Max: My personal favorites are Morrissey, David Bowie, and Iggy Pop, in that order. To me, a great frontman needs to register in that part of the audience's brain that measures how sexually attracted we are to a person. I don't mean that the frontman has to be attractive or especially clever – although neither hurts – I only mean that what an audience wants from a band is that which we all want from our love life: the familiar and the unknowable in one package. We want to see a guy who writes songs as if he knows us personally, but with whom we know we can't truly relate. For some, that comes from simply seeing a self-important asshole who gets to act like a brat while you must spend your day behaving, a la Johnny Rotten. For others, it comes from being out-cooled by an aloof prick, a la Lou Reed.

SCM: *What's the worst aspect of being a Boston band?*

Max: My least favorite aspect is that there's no escape from Boston but escape itself. To some positive effect, Boston has been sheltered from plundering label reps for a very long time, but that oversight is beginning to outstrip whatever benefits it may have once conferred to the bands laboring here. It's frustrating. As a result of all this shelter, Boston bands compete for very limited resources and as a result, many become paranoid, uninteresting, or cannibalistic long before any real chance for success materializes. The parallels between our music scene and our baseball scene are startling, really.

SCM: *So would you agree that there's an underdog insider mentality here that makes bands less inclined to tour or be open about trying to "make it," sort of like the analogy about crabs in a barrel that pull down any who try to escape?*

Max: Not exactly. I think that any band trying to break into the national scene, no matter where they live in the U.S., is going to be covetous. I mean, that's the nature of any capitalist system, right? We all want to keep up with the Joneses. So your crab analogy could describe any music scene, I think. What I was actually complaining about is Boston's lack of upward mobility. There's a really basic rule behind practically everything we do as a species: we always provide an escape for those at the top so that new people can move up to take their places. Death is the most basic example of this; retirement is another; graduation, and so on. Portland hit critical mass in the late '80s/early '90s, and something like K Records became a necessity, and then became a reality. Boston has been at critical mass for 20 years, so my question becomes this: where the fuck is our Calvin Johnson? Where's our Pavitt and Poneman? The doubly frustrating thing, for me anyway, is that I believe if someone with enough startup capital to effectively promote two or three albums on a nationwide level were to start a label and sign The Information, The Signal, December Sound, Anti-Love Project, the Good North, Bon Savants, and the Model Sons, that person would have a very successful business within a year, and the rest of the enlivened scene all to themselves for two or three years at least. I realize that's not cheap, but this is New England. Surely some trust fund kid can scrape together the dough and do this out of his parent's bedroom.

SCM: *So how did you guys create a buzz for yourselves so quickly?*

Max: [Goes on some Grammy Awards acceptance speech tangent thanking all the people who took an early interest in the band.]

SCM: *Wrong. The correct answer is that you guys went to tons of shows and handed out promo CDs in really cool packaging for weeks before your first gig.*

Max: This is a fine point. The reason may be that we have more weapons at our disposal than most bands: Brad, Deb, and I are all very experienced and excellent graphic designers (print, print, and interactive, respectively), Zack and Heath have been working the local PR circuit as members of other bands for years apiece, and Ashley has connections all over the country with studios, booking agents, club owners, and labels from her days with Servotron. We combine to form a giant robot, but it isn't pretty on account of Heath's hemophilia. Anyway, each of us has a specific talent, and we also trust one another implicitly. There's an amazing amount of autonomy possible when you have a situation like that, and that means there's an amazing efficacy to everything The Information undertakes. We're like ants, but not so small and bitey. Well, to be fair, I bite, but am unable to break human skin. 🐜

The Information plays the Knitting Factory in NYC and Great Scott's in Allston November 14th and 15th respectively with Swervedriver's Adam Franklin. Visit <http://www.theinformation.net/> for details and MP3s.

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BAND FORMING

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man@aol.com~

Guitar player looking to start metal band. Drummer wanted. Influences vary (Sabbath, Superjoint, Nothingface) must have good gear and chops. contact Chris (508)754.1057 or my-opiasound@hotmail.com Worcester/Boston area~

Frank Zappa tribute band seeks musicians. We have Frank, drums, bass and keyboards. Need second keyboard/vocals, guitar/vocals, marimba/percussion. Band desperately needs powerful soul singer. Call Tom at (508) 793-1938 or Steve at (617) 924-9129. E-mail: stickit2me@netzero.net~

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Professional Rock artist/band looking for motivated, responsible, enthusiastic individual for touring and studio sessions for new album. Infl.: Filter, Creed, Rush. Please contact john@beacon-entertainment.com, (978) 749-2766, www.jafoworld.com~#781-665-5496

Drummer wanted for an all original pop/rock band called Local Radio. Lots of material, debut CD, and gigs, with radio airplay pending. Need the right drummer to fill the bill. Do not call if you prefer to play speed metal, heavy stuff, etc. You can hear song clips at www.cdbaby.com/localradio - if you like what you hear and want to audition for a committed band, call or write, and we'll send you a copy of the CD. Dave (781) 704-3021 / www.localradiomusic.com~

Drummer wanted for original rockabilly/punk/blues band. Must be in 20's and willing to practice. Have many songs written and ready. Call Dave at (617) 416-8306 or e-mail rocknsockndemon@yahoo.com~

Hard Rock band in Lynn, MA seeks serious drummer between the ages of 16-20. Email: John at atreus3210@yahoo.com or aim at ThePhantom487~

Drummer needed for up and coming Cover/original band Fushia Marmalade. Must be open minded, dedicated and versatile. Able to practice 2 times a week and gig out about 2 times a month. We have contacts and free rehearsal space. Influences include: Melissa Etheridge, Michelle Branch, Violent Femmes, Icube and many others. Please call Al at (603) 828-6667 or Lianne at (603) 828-6864. NH~

Drummer Wanted for Boston based Death Metal band. Infl. Death, Incantation, Venom. Dbl. bass, stamina, brutality, dedication. We're late 20's/early 30's. No drugs or fascism. Contact Larissa (617) 628-0708 or litacore@att.net~

Drummer wanted for Sensorium, check us out at www.sensoriumsound.com Call Jerry (617) 851-3209 for an audition, good attitude, equipment, and transportation a must~

Drummer available, 12 yrs exp. Looking for serious players. Must have rehearsal space, CD, or website. I have transpo/gear/demo. Call Maria (617) 571-1028 or (prefer) Email: mjdwdrum@aol.com ~

BASSIST WANT/AVL

Former members of the Bloodsuckers and Powder Keg looking for bass player with ambition, a sense of humor and a team player. No egos. Influences Kiss to Johnny Cash. Contact: Roby, Ryan or Ry'al Lindgren (603) 672-0797 or (603) 673-9848

Cape bass available. Alternative county/Blues/Roots-rock influenced. (Yoakam ,Isaak, Mavericks, Wilco, Jayhawks, Swinging Steaks, Black Crowes, Wallflowers, etc.) Will travel for right band. Chris (508) 420-7422 / Lostin1978@Juno.com

Do you want to be a Rockstar? Christian rock band MU5TARD is looking for a bass player to tour and record with. For info call (207) 676-0975 and check out www.mu5tard.com~

Electric Bass seeks working full-time ensemble. 2-3 nights at least of paying work with intent to be doing 4 or 5. Prefer a players band with a variety of influences and an R&B and rock base. I am able to tour and record. Tom Martin www.electribass.net (603) 978-2178~

Bassist needed for new long term Heavy, Melodic band. 2 guitars drums and vox so far. Practice space in Peabody MA, have PA. Contact Matt (978) 902-3534 / mybandsucks@yahoo.com~

Year Zero is looking for a new ska bass player, must have dedication and transortation. We practice 3-4 times a week in Brockton. 21+ preferred, but not a big thing if not. We have a couple of recordings and a lot of free studio time. You can go to www.yearzero.8k.com to hear some music. Please email at: yearzero02003@yahoo.com~

Aggressive, high energy bass player with great equip and attitude looking to join original band. Modern rock, hardcore, pop. alt., metal. From Salem, NH area. Call Jay at (603) 858-4496~

GUITARIST WANT/AVL

Guitarist Wanted: Band looking for experienced metal lead guitarist. Must have gear, experience and transportation. We have original material, rehearsal space, recording equipment and are looking to get out. If interested call Paul at (781) 231-5875 or email pwildman@comcast.net

Looking for lead guitar player, real shredder with tasteful solos. Also looking for a synth player (female preferred, but not necessary) We rehearse in Stoughton,MA. In the process of recording our brand new CD, and need these last two elements to complete the band. (The name of our band is Forever's Fallen Grace, ex- members of Aggressor, For Fear Of, and Dread.) Please contact me at: Kronikmark@hotmail.com. Our music is all original, and our influences are varied. Please inquire within. (the age group between 29-34)

Guitarist seeks band or other players into modern hard rock to gig and record. I have national tour experience, pro gear and tons of fresh material. I've come close to landing a deal in the past and would like to accomplish that goal this time around. Please be serious, professional and good at what you do. Call Matt at (781) 335-0700 for more information~

I'm an avail. rhythm/lead/slide/guitarist able to tour, record. I'm into orig's, classic rock, bluesy stuff as well as acoustic. Check out my site at: www.besonic.com/garyvachon or Email: garyv777@hotmail.com~

Guitarist looking to form/join a pro metal band. I have original sound and songs, CD and demo from previous/current bands and projects, Pro gear, stage and studio experience, serious connects. Looking for young (pref. 20+), fully dedicated players determined to conquer the genre and masses. If you're looking for the real deal, contact me A.S.A.P. Jon (781) 890-5992 jaaron777@yahoo.com. Check out MP3.com/dilate_demo~

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Local Boston band seeks lead vocals. Have space, PA. Already gigging. Please don't waste our time. Only singers need call. Hard rock - funk. Call Steve (617) 633-4641

Singer/songwriter seeks musicians for original rock band. Influences: Creed, Tonic, POM, Goo Goo Dolls, Nirvana, Fuel, Incubus, Collective Soul, etc. Has PA. Also plays keys if needed. Located in N Shore. 25-35. Nordicism@aol.com

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Allston band looking for female keys/vocals whatever else member bjork/radiohead/mars.volta/postal service. Must be over 18 call K at (617) 548-0780

Pro rock vox seeks band!! Pros only, ages 25-30, cool image a must!! Bands I like: Kiss, GnR, Crue, Fuel, Manson, STP, Black Crowes, Nickelback, AFI etc... Vocal influences: Chris Robinson, Scott Weiland, Chris Cornell, Jon Bon Jovi etc.. Serious people call Pauly C. (617) 924-5944

Looking for vocalist for rock reggae jazz hip-hop three-piece. Email: kind0nutzy@aol.com~

Former members of Dead Game Dogs and Humansbeing seeking melodic frontman for heavy project. Influences range from Tool, System, Zappa, Pantera. Email: mackinproductions@comcast.net. Call (978) 740-0170~

Female singer wanted by guitarist, singer, songwriter for original rock, blues, funk band. CD project, gigs, tour, etc. I have contacts, backing \$, rehearsal space, PA. etc. Rehearse 20 min. north of Boston, two times a week. Call (978) 657 4610 before 9 p.m.~

Ld. singer available. Have free space in Billerica, full P.A., total dedication. I write lyrics. Team player. Looking for serious band or people. No Nu-metal, no egomaniacs, no drugs or booze habits. You must have own trans and equipment. Into King Diamond, Crimson Glory, Fates Warning, Maiden, Priest, Metal Church, etc. Only serious calls please. (781) 393-0360 or Email: bigmanjamie41@aol.com~

Exeter, NH based band seeks vocalist frontman. Classic to modern rock and originals. Rehearse Mon. & Thurs. 6:30 to 9:30. Call Jim at: (603) 778-3894 or (617) 797-5190~

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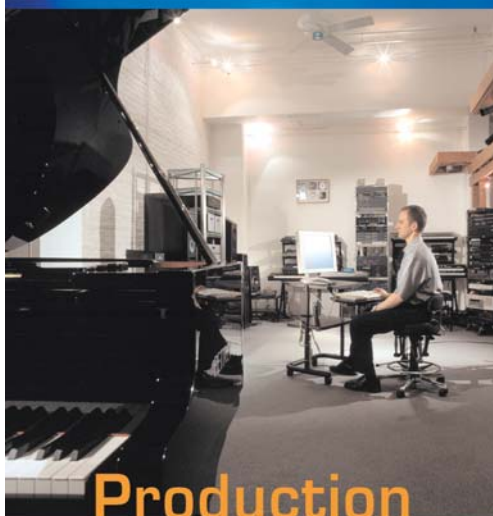
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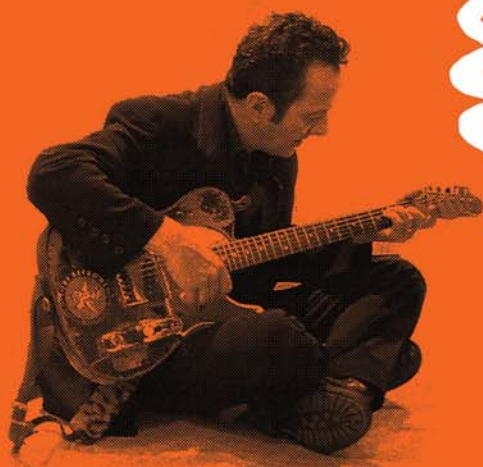
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